

Philology, printing, and the perfection of humanism

At roughly the same time *De hominibus doctis* was making the rounds in Rome and Florence, in Venice Marcantonio Sabellico was putting the finishing touches on his own imitation of Cicero's *Brutus*, *De latinae linguae reparatione*.¹ Their common literary model and their shared roots in the *Accademia Pomponiana* endow these two works with many similarities, especially a preoccupation with the purity of Latin and the tendency to attribute the grandest cultural importance to language. Like Cortesi, Sabellico portrays humanism as a battle against barbarism. He evokes a dramatic struggle for the salvation of ancient Roman civilization, all wrapped up in the effort, signaled by the title of the dialogue, to "restore the Latin language" (*latinae linguae reparatio*). An important intertext for Sabellico's particular paradigm is Lorenzo Valla's first preface to the *Elegantiae*, which militaristically called for the very linguistic undertaking whose history Sabellico's dialogue narrates. A comparison of the two works shows that Sabellico, while adopting Valla's view of Latin's power, channels that energy, like Flavio Biondo, into Italian identity.

¹ Sabellico, *DLLR*. On Sabellico, the most thorough general source (albeit rare) is Giovanni Rita, *Da Vicovaro a Venezia: Introduzione a Marcantio Sabellico* (Vicovaro, 2004). Shorter, more accessible synthetic accounts are Francesco Tateo, "Coccio, Marcantonio, detto Marcantonio Sabellico," in *DBI*, vol. XXVI (1982), pp. 510–515; and Egmont Lee, "Marcantonio Sabellico of Vicovaro, 1436–1506," in Bietenholz and Deutscher (eds.), *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, vol. III, pp. 181–182. Among older bibliography, see especially Giovanni Mercati, *Ultimi contributi alla storia degli umanisti*, fasc. 2 (Vatican City, 1939), pp. 1–23. See also the more recent treatments by Ruth Chavasse, "The *studia humanitatis* and the Making of a Humanist Career: Marcantonio Sabellico's Exploitation of Humanist Literary Genres," *Renaissance Studies*, 17:1 (2003), pp. 27–38; Chavasse, "Humanism Commemorated: The Venetian Memorials to Benedetto Brugnolo and Marcantonio Sabellico," in Peter Denley and Caroline Elam (eds.), *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein* (London, 1988), pp. 455–461; Chavasse, "The First Known Author's Copyright, September 1486, in the Context of a Humanist Career," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 69 (1986), pp. 11–37; King, *Venetian Humanism*, esp. pp. 425–427 (with bibliography); and Guglielmo Bottari, "Introduzione," in Sabellico, *DLLR*, pp. 7–67. Further bibliography is available in Rita, *Da Vicovaro a Venezia*, pp. 165–168, and Tateo, "Coccio, Marcantonio," pp. 514–515.

In addition to its connection to Roman humanism, *De latinae linguae reparatione* is distinguished by its proximity to the Venetian milieu as well as by the peculiar vision of its author. Sabellico takes a decidedly northern point of view and even places humanism's origins in the teaching of the great schoolmaster of Padua, Gasparino Barzizza. A certain amount of the dialogue is also dedicated to describing the special character of humanism in Venice, part of which includes patriotic praise of the city. In another departure from the narrative to which we have become accustomed, Sabellico almost entirely neglects the Byzantine contribution to humanism. Stunningly, even Manuel Chrysoloras disappears from humanism's history. As if to announce that humanism had utterly renounced its origins, Sabellico also ignores Petrarch and all other Trecento figures. Humanism miraculously begins, in his account, with an instance of spontaneous combustion in the Po Valley. Apart from this foible, the history Sabellico recounts is the most complete and nuanced we have yet encountered. With surprising sensitivity to how cultural movements evolve over time, he identifies stages of development, pivotal figures who hoisted humanism from one platform to the next, and key turning points and innovations essential to humanism's success.

In another unexpected aspect of his text, Sabellico relates this success directly to textual editing, the novel technology of printing, and their marriage in printed philological commentaries – all hallmarks of humanism in Venice. His discussion of commentaries bears on generational divides and differences of opinion in the humanist community, structural changes in the transmission of knowledge, and the nature of humanist education. But most striking is his notion that commentaries are the vehicle for bringing the humanist project to completion. Sabellico's attention to these facets of humanism give us great insight into the literary culture of his day. Unlike the other humanists in this study, he inhabits a bustling world of bibliophiles, of overflowing book shops and trend-setting libraries, and of overwhelmed *litterati* struggling to accrue the blessings of the *multitudo librorum* without bending fatally under its collective weight.²

Marcantonio Coccio, better known as Sabellico (1436–1506), has left his mark primarily as an historian.³ His two longest and most important

² Cf. Ann Blair, *Too Much To Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven, 2010), pp. 46–61.

³ See Felix Gilbert, "Biondo, Sabellico, and the Beginnings of Venetian Official Historiography," in J.G. Rowe and W.H. Stockdale (eds.), *Florilegium Historiale: Essays Presented to Wallace K. Ferguson* (Toronto, 1971), pp. 276–293. For a damning assessment of Sabellico's historiography, see Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography*, pp. 83–86, esp. 84: "Thus Sabellico managed to combine the principal

works are a history of Venice, the *Historiae rerum venetarum ab urbe condita* (1487), and the *Enneades* (1498–1504), a massive universal history. A native of Vicovaro, in the Sabina region northeast of Rome, he studied under Pomponio Leto and Domizio Calderini. Under Leto's direction he dedicated himself to poetry, and he is said to have been crowned poet laureate by Emperor Frederick III in 1469.⁴ After the breakup of Leto's first Academy (1468), Sabellico left Rome in the 1470s to make his career in northern Italy and especially in Venice, where he spent the last twenty years of his life and eventually became professor of literature at the School of San Marco. His fame in his own day, especially in Venice, was substantial.⁵ His *Historiae rerum venetarum* was adopted by the city as an official history.⁶ He published in a variety of other genres as well, including poetry, orations, letters, and philological commentaries,⁷ works reprinted many times both before and after his death. His *Epistulae* were among the first to be conceived for the printed book market (coeval with Aldus' edition of Poliziano's letters) and appear to have been used as a school text in northern Europe.⁸ As Martin Lowry has noted, Sabellico "probably deserves the title usually reserved for Erasmus – that of being the first writer to make a career from the new medium" of printing.⁹ Upon his death he received a state funeral (with an oration delivered by his one-time enemy, Giambattista Egnazio) and was buried in accordance with his wish in the monastic church of S. Maria delle Grazie; his tomb, now in the Correr Museum,

defects both of Quattrocento humanist historiography and of the Venetian chronicle tradition." Cochrane does not consider *De latinae linguae reparatione*. Rita, *Da Vicovaro a Venezia*, is largely devoted to rehabilitating Sabellico as an historian.

⁴ For Sabellico's poetic output, see especially Rita, *Da Vicovaro a Venezia*, pp. 23–31. On Sabellico's crowning, see Chavasse, "The *studia humanitatis*," p. 37. Rita, *Da Vicovaro a Venezia*, pp. 23–24 and n. 34, treats the episode with skepticism.

⁵ In the estimation of Dionisotti, *Gli umanisti*, p. 15, "L'umanesimo a Venezia, fra Quattro e Cinquecento, non si identifica con Aldo e con il gruppo che a lui fa capo. Dopo la morte di Giorgio Valla (1500), il più autorevole umanista ivi rimasto era, senza dubbio alcuno, Marcantonio Sabellico." Another mark of Sabellico's importance is that he was named librarian of the Marciana, an office he apparently discharged with as little devotion as possible. See Martin Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius: Business and Scholarship in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford, 1979), p. 51.

⁶ As clarified in Chavasse, "The First Known Author's Copyright," the *Historiae* was not commissioned as an official history but was recognized as such after its composition and was therefore given a copyright by the city.

⁷ For a review of Sabellico's emendations to Catullus, see Gaisser, *Catullus and his Renaissance Readers*, pp. 48–52.

⁸ Chavasse, "The *studia humanitatis*," p. 37. An extended treatment of Sabellico's letters is found in Rita, *Da Vicovaro a Venezia*, pp. 113–138.

⁹ Lowry, *World of Aldus*, p. 28 (quoted in Chavasse, "The First Known Author's Copyright," p. 11). Chavasse, "The *studia humanitatis*," traces what she calls Sabellico's "exploitation of humanist literary genres" and his systematic use of printing (his own works) in order to advance his career as a professional humanist.

was venerated by his students and other scholars throughout the sixteenth century.¹⁰

In modern times, however, Sabellico occupies a much lower niche in the pantheon of humanism, and his *De latinae linguae reparatione*, which even at the time of its publication was considered a minor work, has sunk almost entirely into oblivion.¹¹ The dialogue's precise date of composition is difficult to ascertain, but it seems to have been finished by the end of 1489.¹² It enjoyed moderate success in the sixteenth century, as far as can be discerned from its influence on kindred texts.¹³ Thereafter it suffered centuries of neglect until a facsimile of a Cinquecento edition was eventually reprinted in 1992.¹⁴ Finally, Guglielmo Bottari produced a modern critical edition of the text in 1999.¹⁵

The scant attention *De latinae linguae reparatione* has received is inversely proportional to its value, both in terms of its literary merit and as a source of information for humanist identity. As I have argued elsewhere,¹⁶ the dialogue is a complex and subtle piece of literature designed to vie with the ancients in the genre of criticism. Its aim, which it achieves with understated grace, is to outdo Cicero's *Brutus* and other similar texts by being the first of its genre to offer a critical review not only of the great authors of the past but also of living writers. But Sabellico's text is much more than a piece of literary criticism. Like Cortesi's *De hominibus doctis*, it is one of the first thorough histories of humanism.¹⁷

The dialogue sets out to answer two discrete questions that, through its exposition, become one: (1) "whether in the great mass of new writings

¹⁰ Chavasse, "Humanism Commemorated," pp. 455 and 459. For an image of the tomb by Antonio Lombardo, see Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venice and Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past* (New Haven, 1996), p. 240.

¹¹ Emblematic of Sabellico's reputation among modern scholars is the opinion of Martin Lowry, *World of Aldus*, p. 183, who dismisses Sabellico as a second-rate philologist and journalistic popularizer.

¹² Bottari, "Introduzione" (Sabellico), pp. 22–25. According to Lowry, *World of Aldus*, p. 29, it was first printed in 1493.

¹³ Including Lilio Gregorio Giraldi's *De poetis nostrorum temporum* (1553). See Bottari, "Introduzione" (Sabellico), pp. 10–11.

¹⁴ Di Stefano et al. (eds.), *La storiografia umanistica*, vol. II, pp. 197–229.

¹⁵ Sabellico, *DLLR*. Bottari's introduction and notes constitute the most in-depth and informative scholarship on the dialogue. See also Baker, "Labyrinth of Praise and Blame"; and Konrad Krautter's short but insightful "Marcus Antonius Sabellicus' Dialog 'De latinae linguae reparatione.'" For partial treatments and sundry observations on the dialogue, see Francesco Tateo, *I miti della storiografia umanistica* (Rome, 1990), pp. 210–214 [in ch. 8: "Venezia e la storia esemplare di Livio in Marcantonio Sabellico," which is a revised version of his earlier "Marcantonio Sabellico e la svolta del classicismo quattrocentesco," in *Florence and Venice: Comparisons and Relations. Acts of Two Conferences at Villa I Tatti in 1976–1977* (Florence, 1979), vol. I, pp. 41–63]; Ferrau, "Introduzione," pp. 20–22; and Lowry, *World of Aldus*, pp. 36–38.

¹⁶ See Baker, "Labyrinth of Praise and Blame," pp. 230–237.

¹⁷ On the historical nature of the dialogue, see Baker, "Labyrinth of Praise and Blame."

which have appeared in our studies in the last few years, the Latin language seems to have been made richer or more correct than it was before;¹⁸ and (2) “what we owe to each of those who in modern times have aided the Latin language.”¹⁹ These questions are posed at the outset of the dialogue in an outer dramatic frame, in which Marcantonio Sabellico has a casual conversation with two Veronese friends visiting him in Venice, the humanists Iacopo Conte Giuliani and Virgilio Zavarise.²⁰ Giuliani asks Marcantonio to give his opinion on “those who in modern times have aided the Latin language.” Marcantonio refuses but offers to recount two speeches he heard on the same subject earlier that year. Thereupon begins the dialogue’s inner frame, which constitutes the lion’s share of the text and is composed of two long speeches.²¹ The first is by Benedetto Brugnoli, a long-time teacher in Venice and the beloved and revered master of its San Marco School (where Sabellico also taught).²² The second is by Battista Guarini, the son of the great educator Guarino of Verona and himself a teacher and the author of a popular educational treatise.²³ Both men trace the modern history of Latin language and literature by means of a critical review of the outstanding humanists of the fifteenth century, cataloguing the contributions they have made in the form of written works and teaching. Brugnoli treats humanists from the movement’s founding to about the third quarter of the fifteenth century, at which point Guarini takes

¹⁸ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 86.10–12: “an in tanta novorum scriptorum copia quanta paucis annis in his studiis emersit, aut locupletior quam antea sibi latina lingua aut emendatior facta videatur.”

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.27–28: “quid cuique eorum, qui recentissimis temporibus latinam linguam iuvare, debeamus.” Quite similar formulations are found in the dedicatory letter: “what is rightly owed to each of those on account of whom we have ceased speaking so clumsily” (83.23–24: “quid eorum cuique per quos tam inepte loqui desinimus deberi oporteat”); and later in the dialogue, where it is said to be a “conversation about those who in recent times have made a contribution to the Latin language” (91.7–8: “sermo de his qui recenti saeculo aliquid in communem latinae linguae usum edidissent”).

²⁰ On Giuliani and Zavarise, see Bottari, “Introduzione” (Sabellico), pp. 13–15 with notes. For an explanation of the dramatic structure of the dialogue, including the functions assigned to outer and inner dramatic frames, see Baker, “Labyrinth of Praise and Blame,” esp. pp. 214–216.

²¹ With all its different characters and complex structure, the dialogue presents a complicated problem of interpretation, one I have tried to resolve in my “Labyrinth of Praise and Blame.” There I argue that Sabellico has constructed *De latinae linguae reparatione* in such a way that most of the opinions expressed by his several characters, and all of the judgments on humanists rendered by Brugnoli and Guarini in their two long speeches, can be taken as representing Sabellico’s own point of view. For clarity’s sake I will often note which character says what, but I will also attribute their utterances to Sabellico, the true author of their speeches. See Baker, “Labyrinth of Praise and Blame,” pp. 234–235.

²² On Brugnoli, see Sabellico, *DLLR*, 91.3ff. See also King, *Venetian Humanism*, esp. pp. 342–343 (where he is called Brognoli). For a treatment of his teaching career, see Lowry, *World of Aldus*, pp. 181–183 (where he is called Brugnolo).

²³ On Guarini, see Sabellico, *DLLR*, 89.1ff. See also Gino Pistilli, “Guarini, Battista,” in *DBI*, vol. LX (2003), pp. 339–345. His treatise is *De ordine docendi et studendi*, available in Latin–English parallel text in the I Tatti Renaissance Library: *Humanist Educational Treatises*, pp. 260–309.

over, focusing specifically on humanist commentators – those involved in the philological explication and emendation of classical texts – down to the present day. In this review of the great Quattrocento humanists, the sum of their achievements (question 2) becomes the answer to the question about Latin (question 1): yes, humanism has, as indicated by the title and echoed throughout the dialogue, “restored the Latin language.”²⁴

Even more so than Cortesi, Sabellico uses a complex literary form to transmit a holistic vision of Italian humanism. On the basis of a careful, close reading, this chapter aims to reconstruct that vision from his literary creation, divided into four main parts. First, it considers the cultural meaning Sabellico assigned to humanism. Then it traces his history of humanism, divided into successive phases under the leadership of various individuals. Third, it surveys the nature of humanism that emerges from his account. Finally, it focuses on Sabellico’s insightful observations on the relationship between commentaries, printing, and libraries to humanism.

The liberation of Latin and the refoundation of civilization

Good Latin had broader parameters for Sabellico than it did for Cortesi. While the latter based his reputation on the faithful imitation of Cicero, the former had a more catholic taste.²⁵ To judge from his own style in the dialogue, Quintilian enjoyed pride of place, followed by Cicero and Livy.²⁶ Nevertheless, Sabellico does not limit himself to these personal preferences. He names no one author worthy of imitation but rather a literary epoch: the Latin of the Roman republic and the empire down to the Gothic invasions of the fifth century. Thus even though the word “classical” had not yet been adopted in the Renaissance, much less consistently applied to the stylistic register and time period indicated here, it seems the most proper way to translate Sabellico’s usage.²⁷

²⁴ See Baker, “Labyrinth of Praise and Blame,” pp. 228–230. The title, “De latinae linguae reparatione,” is reiterated in the dedicatory letter (83.20) and slightly modified within the text: “de romanae linguae reparatione” (168.16–17) and “de latinae linguae instauratione” (204.3).

²⁵ Tateo, *I miti*, p. 210, views the matter differently, conflating Sabellico with Cortesi’s Ciceronianism.

²⁶ Bottari, “Introduzione” (Sabellico), pp. 66–67. Sabellico’s taste accords with his extremely high praise of Lorenzo Valla and Angelo Poliziano.

²⁷ On the thorny concept of the “classical,” see Salvatore Settis, “Classical,” in Grafton, Most, and Settis (eds.), *The Classical Tradition*, pp. 205–206; and James I. Porter (ed.), *Classical Pasts: The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome* (Princeton, 2005). In the sense of denoting a high stylistic register, membership in a group of authors approved for correct linguistic usage, and by extension a time period in which these flourished, “classical” (*classicus*) was first used by Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights*, 19.8.15), in a figural borrowing from the jargon of tax brackets. It was not used in medieval Latin, and it first appeared in the Renaissance in the commentaries of Sabellico’s contemporary, Filippo

Instead of “classical” Sabellico, adopting Lorenzo Valla’s terminology in the *Elegantiae*, says “Roman.” Yet the term connotes different things in Valla’s and Sabellico’s writings. For Valla, *lingua romana* suggested not only the language of the bygone empire but also the idiom of his own Rome, the place of his birth. By calling Latin *romana*, Valla forges a link between past and present, stressing both political and cultural continuity.²⁸ More will be said below about Valla’s cultural politics and their relationship to Sabellico’s. For now let it suffice to point out that when Sabellico says *romana lingua*, he wants his reader to think not of the Rome of his own day but rather of ancient Rome. Yet he, too, projects continuity between past and present; for him, as for Biondo Flavio, Latin stands as the eternal patrimony of Italy and Italians, rooted in the glory of the ancient Roman empire with its center on the Italian peninsula. Latin is the cultural sinews of a perennial Italian identity. On the one hand Sabellico associates Latin with ancient Rome by freely interchanging *latina lingua* with *romana lingua*, *latinae litterae* with *romanae litterae*. On the other he connects it to his own time and people with the equally free substitution of *nostrae* or *nostrates litterae* for *latinae* or *romanae*, and of *patrius sermo* for *romanus sermo*.²⁹ To drive the point home, he twice refers to Latin as “an ancestral right.”³⁰ The achievement of Renaissance humanism is that “Rome and the rest of Italy has gotten its language back.”³¹

Sabellico has a very precise sense of Latin’s history, which he depicts as an heroic tale of decline, fall, and renewal in which much more is at

Beroaldo. See Mario Citroni, “The Concept of the Classical and the Canons of Model Authors in Roman Literature,” in Porter (ed.), *Classical Pasts*, pp. 204–234, esp. 204–211. Interestingly, Sabellico’s (1490) and Beroaldo’s (1493) commentaries on Suetonius were printed together in 1496 and several times in the sixteenth century. See Chavasse, “The *studia humanitatis*,” pp. 31–32, and Paolo Pellegrini, “Studiare Svetonio a Padova alla fine del Quattrocento,” *Incontri triestini di filologia classica*, 7 (2007–2008), pp. 53–64, at 54.

²⁸ See D’Amico, *Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 118–119; Garin, *L’umanesimo italiano*, pp. 66–69; Alan Fisher, “The Project of Humanism and Valla’s Imperial Metaphor,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 23 (1993), pp. 301–322; David Marsh, “Grammar, Method, and Polemic in Lorenzo Valla’s *Elegantiae*,” *Rinascimento*, 2nd ser., 19 (1979), pp. 91–116; Jensen, “The Humanist Reform of Latin and Latin Teaching,” in Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, p. 64. For the text of the prefaces to the *Elegantiae*, see *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento*, ed. and tr. Eugenio Garin (Milan, 1952), pp. 594–631. A critical edition of the first preface is available in Mariangela Regoliosi, *Nel cantiere del Valla. Elaborazione e montaggio delle Elegantiae* (Rome, 1993), pp. 120–125.

²⁹ E.g., *latina lingua*: title, 84.5–6, 87.28, and *passim*; *romana lingua*: 83.10, 95.22, 109.6; *latinae litterae*: 92.12; *romanae litterae*: 87.1, 96.17; *nostrae litterae*: 87.4; *nostrates litterae*: 91.9; *patrius sermo*: 121.1; *romanus sermo*: 87.11, 168.6.

³⁰ Once in his own name, in the dedicatory letter: “latinam linguam quasi postliminio recepimus” (84.5–6); and once in the mouth of a character (Guarini): “veteres scriptores postliminio receptos” (171.12).

³¹ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 203.10–11: “suum Roma caeteraque Italia recepit sermonem.”

stake than the aesthete's inner enjoyment of high style. As his characters several times describe it, Latin's restoration has finally occurred after about a millennium of slavery to a cultural interregnum of barbarism.³² The carriers of this barbarism – Goths, Huns, and Longobards – invaded Italy starting in the early fifth century after the peninsula had been weakened by the transfer of the empire's capital from Rome to Constantinople. They laid waste Rome's people and temples, its buildings and monuments, and even its public and private libraries. They obliterated its civilization in every respect. Charlemagne eventually subdued them, but the process of cultural and specifically linguistic decay continued. Once "squalid barbarism" and the "deformity of language"³³ had infiltrated the ruins of Rome, no one cared any longer for proper speech or desired language's earlier form. This was the state of affairs until roughly the early fifteenth century, when the first humanists arrived to rouse the Latin language from its slumber.³⁴

In the dialogue, humanism is portrayed primarily as a struggle to overcome this millennium of linguistic barbarism. Sabellico sounds this note right from the outset in his dedicatory letter, proclaiming, "classical Latin, which long lay neglected and nearly dead in the darkness, has now been saved by the effort of a few men from every kind of filth and horrible barbarity."³⁵ Giuliani echoes him in the outer frame of the dialogue, giving thanks that "Latin has emerged from all the filth, all the barbarity, all the squalor under which it had long been sunk."³⁶ Brugnoli continues the theme in the inner frame in his exordium, decrying the "vile devastation of

³² For a more complete exposition of the history of ancient Latin in Sabellico, see Baker, "Labyrinth of Praise and Blame," pp. 221–224.

³³ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 95.17: "illa foeda barbaries"; 95.14: "sermonis foeditas."

³⁴ This reconstruction of Sabellico's history of Latin is mostly based on the beginning of Benedetto Brugnoli's speech: 93.5–96.3. The Gothic invasions as the beginning of Latin's decline are also mentioned in the outer frame by Giuliani: 87.4 ("gothica tempestate"). Charlemagne's role in subduing the barbarians is found in the section on Donato Acciaiuoli, in reference to Acciaiuoli's biography of him: 151.5–6 ("Caroli – qui Italiam langobardicis armis diutissime pressam, barbaris victis, in antiquam libertatem restituit"). About one thousand years as the period of linguistic barbarism is given explicitly in the biography of Gasparino Barzizza: 97.5–98.1 ("quum mille et amplius annos ex quo gethica illa tempestas terram Italiam invaserat") and Battista Guarini's peroration: 203.8–10 ("qui romanam linguam mille circiter et amplius annos indigno pressam servicio in antiquam libertatem vindicarunt"). The early fifteenth century for the beginning of Latin's recovery is an estimate based on the dialogue's date of composition (ca. 1489) and 95.20–23: "For (to tell the truth) after that calamitous age until about fifty years ago no could be found who could speak classical Latin" ("iam enim [si vera loqui volumus] nemo post funestissima illa tempora ad annum hinc circiter quinquagesimum romana locutus lingua videri potuit").

³⁵ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 83.10–12: "qua paucorum hominum industria romanam linguam, quae diu inculta ac pene extincta in tenebris iacuit, ab omni sorde diraque barbarie servatam videres."

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.11–12: "romanus sermo omnem exiit squalorem, omnem barbariem, quibus sordibus diu fuerat immersus."

Italy” and lamenting that “barbarians in their thoughtlessness desecrated all things human and divine.”³⁷

Complementing the theme of barbarism is that of slavery and imprisonment. The “moderns” are declared “worthy of great praise” for having “undertaken to free the glory of Rome from its ancient slavery.”³⁸ Guarini describes humanists as “the ones who returned classical Latin to its ancient freedom, liberating it from more than a thousand years of unworthy servitude.”³⁹ The metaphor is also used in reference to the discovery of lost texts and the emendation of corrupt ones. Poggio Bracciolini, for example, is said to “have set free Quintilian, . . . who was unknown, filthy, and infested with the foul lice of his prison,”⁴⁰ and the early humanists “liberated Cicero, Quintilian, and Catullus from slavery.”⁴¹

It is noteworthy that Sabellico, like Cortesi, nowhere uses the metaphor of renaissance in the dialogue, but rather those of barbarism and slavery, and to a lesser extent of darkness, filth, concealment, and sleep. He does not conceive of Latin as having died and come back to life, the paradigm preferred by contemporary theorizers and historians of the visual arts.⁴² Nor was this decision a casual one. Indeed, these chosen metaphors are repeated time and again, ultimately surging to the level of a massive polemic against the language and culture of the Middle Ages. For Sabellico does not merely criticize the *medium aevum* for living in darkness but rather accuses it of creating and perpetuating that darkness. Latin is described in the dialogue as “holy” and a “divine gift,” one that was first “neglected” and then whose “very memory was sunk into dreadful oblivion.”⁴³ This

³⁷ Ibid., 94.21–22: “Italiam foeda populatione vastarunt”; 95.3–4: “omnia divina et humana barbara prophanavit temeritas.” The reiteration of important themes and arguments at various structural levels of the dialogue – as here is done with the theme of barbarism – is one of Sabellico’s techniques for stressing and legitimating the central aspects of his cultural vision. See Baker, “Labyrinth of Praise and Blame,” pp. 220–226.

³⁸ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 83.13–16: “recentiorum hominum ingenia . . . ob id laudibus efferenda, quod romanum decus vetusto vindicare servitio sint adorta.”

³⁹ Ibid., 203.6–10: “hi sunt igitur . . . qui romanam linguam mille circiter et amplius annos indigno pressam servitio in antiquam libertatem vindicarunt.”

⁴⁰ Ibid., 105.1–4: “Fabium Quintilianum . . . quem ignotum, squalidum tetroque pedore carceris consumptum in apertum rettulit.”

⁴¹ Ibid., 120.2–3: “vindicarunt servitio quidem Ciceronem, Fabium, Catullum.”

⁴² See Chapter 3 above, note 192.

⁴³ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 95.18–20: “Auxit id malum longa aetas, quae non solum negligentiam peperit, sed divini etiam muneris memoriam dira oblivione immerserat.” Latin is also called a “divine gift” (*divinum munus*) in 203.20. Language is called “immortal God’s most useful gift to man” in 93.8–9 (“sermo quoque, quo nihil Deus immortalis homini utilius dedit”) and, similarly, “nature’s most useful gift to man” in 121.12 (“sermonem, quo nihil ab ipsa natura est homini utilius datum”). Latin literature is also described as a “holy treasury” that was destroyed by the barbarians, 95.7 (“divino etiam litterarum thesauro”). Cf. *Prosatori latini*, p. 596, where, in his preface to the first book of the *Elegantiae*, Lorenzo Valla refers to the *magnum latini sermonis sacramentum*.

neglect was the cultural stain of the Middle Ages, a sin only atoned for by Renaissance humanism's veneration and restoration of the *divinum munus* of Latin.

One way that humanists overcame this millennium of (self-imposed) barbarism was to re-establish a cultivated setting for the new old language. Sabellico does not make the more sophisticated link, as does Cortesi, between good speaking and good thinking, but he does recognize the symbiotic relationship between audience and language. When describing the supposed barbarism of the Middle Ages, Brugnoli says, "no one could be found who spoke classical Latin. And if there was anyone who was able to, he would have appeared to his listeners to be speaking some unknown language."⁴⁴ Although not as explicitly as Biondo Flavio, Sabellico seems to admit the fact that eloquence had not died out entirely between antiquity and his own time. Yet he is not at a loss to explain the phenomenon, as Biondo was when it came to the eloquence of Bernard of Clairvaux. One swallow doesn't make a spring, he seems to say; one eloquent individual is not enough. A language requires a community of speakers in order to flourish, not a few gifted individuals. An eloquent age is necessary.⁴⁵

By instaurating such an age of eloquence, humanists have furthermore recovered an essential aspect of Roman and Italian civilization. We have already seen above that Sabellico considered classical Latin to be Italy's birthright. In addition, Guarini portrays Latin eloquence as an essential characteristic of Italian identity. In his peroration he argues that, if humanism had not saved Latin, it would have been better for literature – all the historians, poets, orators, and great luminaries – never to have come to Italy from Greece in the first place.⁴⁶

Many peoples are ignorant of literature and thus do not even desire it. Italy, however, not only perceived this divine gift but also gave it to . . . others. What greater disaster could befall her, into what greater and more enduring mourning could she settle – since fortune left her with nothing from her once-great empire beyond the pride of her literature – than if she were ultimately stripped even of this refinement and true praise?⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 95.21–96.1: "nemo . . . romana locutus lingua videri potuit, aut si quis extitit qui potuerit id praestare, non magis est inter suos auditus, quam si ignoto aliquo sermone fuisset locutus."

⁴⁵ On the other hand, he seems implicitly to contradict Cortesi's argument that no individual can rise above his times.

⁴⁶ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 203.14–18, referring, of course, to the first *translatio studii*, in ancient times.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.18–25: "Multae gentes litteras non norunt atque ob id ne desiderant quidem. At terra Italia, quae id divinum munus non solum senserat, sed aliis etiam gentibus . . . dederat, cui nihil ex

In one of his higher rhetorical flights, Sabellico's Brugnoli explicitly describes humanism as a refoundation of ancient Roman civilization, comparing the efforts of Latin's modern saviors to the Romans' repelling of the Gauls, who, as Livy recounts, had sacked their city in 390 BC:

They held off the assault of riotous barbarism, but they could not beat it back. They freed Cicero, Quintilian, and Catullus⁴⁸ from slavery, but this was like [Albinus] bringing the sacred relics and the Vestal virgins to safety on his wagon. They taught rhetoric, and some taught grammar with a bit more care, and this was like [Fabius] conveying the sacred relics through enemy pickets to the Quirinal. Many wrote histories in Latin or translated Greek ones, a feat equal to [Manlius] driving the Gauls from the Citadel with his shield (although they were still within the city walls), besieging the Capitol, and rousing the allies, their standards ranging far and wide. But there was still need of a leader like Camillus to drive the defeated barbarian out from Rome and beyond Italy's borders.⁴⁹

This comparison is no mere piece of show-rhetoric. Brugnoli had begun his speech by comparing the fifth-century (AD) Gothic invasions of Rome with that of the Gauls eight centuries earlier, concluding that the latter had been redeemed through eventual victory and rebuilding, whereas the former had not been overcome in antiquity and had resulted in a millennium of barbarism.⁵⁰ That was the state of Italy when the first humanists began their work. To compare the humanists to the Romans besieged by the Gauls in the Capitoline Citadel, and to call upon the aid of a new Camillus – Livy's legendary “father of his country and second founder of

tanto imperio quantum olim habuit, nihil praeter litterarum decus reliquum fortuna fecerat, qua maiore cladi affici potuisset, aut in quem maiorem luctum incidere aut magis perpetuum, quam si hoc quoque cultu et vera laude fuisset demum spoliata?” The image of Italy “giving” her language to others echoes Valla's claim in the first preface to his *Elegantiae* that the imposition of Roman rule on the provinces was accompanied by the liberating gift of Roman language. See *Prosatori latini*, pp. 594–601.

⁴⁸ Textual emendation of Catullus is erroneously attributed to Guarino Veronese in 113.3–7. See *ibid.*, p. 113, n. 2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.1–11: “Sustinuerunt itaque plerique grassantis barbariae impetum, propulsare tamen non potuerunt; vindicarunt servitio quidem Ciceronem, Fabium, Catullum, sed hoc sacra Vestalesque curru in tutum deferre fuit; docuere rhetoricen, alii aliquanto accuratius docuere et grammaticen, et hoc in Quirinalem per hostium stationes cum sacris transire, non nulli latinam edidire historiam aut graecam in latinum vertere, neque id aliud quam Gallos ex arce umbone deturbare (erant nihilominus hostes intra moenia), Capitolium obsidere, finitimos sollicitare eorum signa longe lateque vagare: Camillo duce opus erat, qui barbarum acie victum non solum Urbe sed Italiae etiam finibus eiiceret.” Albinus, Fabius, and Manlius are not mentioned by name in this account, but I have added them in the English translation to make the comparison more readily intelligible. The events mentioned by Sabellico correspond roughly to Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, V.40–55.

⁵⁰ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 92.23–94.18.

Rome”⁵¹ – is to argue by way of analogy that humanism was on the verge of finally overcoming the second, Gothic, sack of Rome.

Who was the new Camillus? Who was the one to put an end to one thousand years of so-called barbarism? None other than Lorenzo Valla, he, too, a Roman, and the source for Sabellico’s historical paradigm here.⁵² In the preface to the first book of his *Elegantiae*, Valla had declared his intention to “imitate Camillus” and exhorted his contemporaries to do the same.⁵³ Brugnoli takes full advantage of the comparison. If Camillus brought the legions back to save Rome, Valla composed the *Elegantiae* to save its language. Their achievements were similar, but Valla’s were “of greater worth, since it was certainly better to give the citizens back their language, nature’s greatest gift to man, than their city.”⁵⁴ The meaning is clear: Camillus’ was a political refounding, Valla’s a cultural one. The ancients refounded the city of Rome in the wake of a barbarian invasion. The humanists, however, refounded the essence of Roman civilization.

There is yet another, subtler layer to this comparison, one that equates humanism with the pious observance of sacred religious rites and duty to the fatherland. Sabellico chooses three specific episodes in the ancient defense of Rome to correspond with the modern efforts of the humanists. First, Albinus’ accommodation of the Vestals and sacred relics is likened to

⁵¹ Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, V.49: “Dictator . . . Romulus ac parens patriae conditorque alter urbis haud vanis laudibus appellabatur.”

⁵² In the preface to the first book of his *Elegantiae*, Valla also compares humanism to a struggle against barbarism, compares Latin’s calamity to the Gauls’ sack of Rome in 390 BC, and calls on a new Camillus to save the language of ancient Rome. He also compares distinct stages in humanism’s development to episodes in Livy, as Sabellico does. But Sabellico chooses different episodes, thus giving the comparison a different focus. Furthermore, his imitation of Valla is not slavish, and it is clear from Brugnoli’s expansion of the historical paradigm to include the destruction of the Gothic invasions that his exordium has a different focus from Valla’s harangue. For the similarities between Sabellico and Valla, see the final “exhortation” Valla addresses to his fellow humanists (“qui et vere et soli Quirites sunt”) in *Prosatori latini*, pp. 598–601 (quotation on p. 600). Sabellico’s use of Valla has also been noted by Bottari, “Introduzione” (Sabellico), pp. 37–38, who, however, does not consider the depth of the similarities and differences.

⁵³ *Prosatori latini*, p. 600: “Equidem, quod ad me attinet, hunc imitabor; hoc mihi proponam exemplum; comparabo, quantulaecumque vires meae fuerint, exercitum, quem in hostes quam primum educam; ibo in aciem, ibo primus, ut vobis animum faciam . . . Ideoque plures pro se quisque in hanc rem elaboremus, ut saltem multi faciamus quod unus effecit. Is tamen iure vereque Camillus dici existimarique debet, qui optimam in hac re operam navaverit.”

⁵⁴ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 121.10–13: “uterque dignus qui pater patriae nominetur, sed eo alter dignior, quod plus certe fuit sermonem, quo nihil ab ipsa natura est homini utilius datum, quam Urbem civibus restituisse suis.” Here we also hear the echo of Valla’s first preface to the *Elegantiae*: “Qui enim imperium augment, magno illi quidem honore affici solent atque imperatores nominantur; qui autem beneficia aliqua in homines contulerunt, ii non humana, sed divina potius laude celebrantur, quippe cum non suae tantum urbis amplitudini ac gloriae consulant, sed publicae quoque hominum utilitati ac saluti” (text in *Prosatori latini*, p. 594).

the humanists' search for and editing of lost ancient texts. In his flight from Rome in the wake of the Gallic victory at the Allia River, Albinus evicted his own wife and children from his wagon to make room for the virgins and the *sacra*, the sacred objects of their cult. Second, the teaching of grammar and rhetoric is equated with Fabius' walking through enemy pickets to perform sacred rites on the Quirinal. This duty was the responsibility of Fabius' family, and he performed it despite almost certain death. Third, translations and original works of historiography are compared to Manlius' driving the Gauls from the Citadel with his shield. Manlius reacted to a night attack by the Gauls, who had crept so silently up the hill that not even the dogs took notice. But the sacred geese of Juno, who had not been eaten despite the defenders' famine, did hear them. Their honking wakened Manlius, who rushed to the point of attack and knocked the first of the enemy back into the rest with his shield, thus causing some Gauls to tumble down in a snowball effect and others to expose themselves to slaughter while searching for a sure grip.⁵⁵

The meaning of all these episodes in Livy is that the public good is more important than the individual good, and that the public good is safeguarded through *pietas*, the distinctly Roman sense of scrupulous duty, related to religious observance, that has the ability to triumph over immediate self-interest. Livy describes *pietas* as having gradually declined in Rome, and he depicts the Gauls' success as the result of divine anger. Fresh demonstrations of *pietas* – in dignifying the priestesses and symbols of Roman religion, in performing sacred rites no matter what the cost, in tending sacred animals despite the very real threat of starvation – is what enabled the refounding of Rome.⁵⁶ By way of comparison, humanists made a fresh demonstration of *pietas* – not to the religion or the city of ancient Rome but to its civilization, which is bound up in its language. For Sabellico, *pietas*, the most important of the ancient Roman virtues, lives on in modified form in the Renaissance.⁵⁷

At times Sabellico also seems to imply that humanists participate in an actual refounding of ancient Roman economic, political, and military

⁵⁵ The three episodes occur in Livy as follows: Albinus brings the sacred relics and the Vestal virgins to safety: V.40; Fabius conveys the sacred relics to the Quirinal: V.46; Manlius defends the Citadel: V.47.

⁵⁶ For my interpretation of Livy I have relied in part on R.M. Ogilvie, *A Commentary on Livy: Books 1–5* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 723–752.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Prosatori latini*, p. 598, where Valla announces that his Latin crusade is the result of *mea in patriam pietas*.

might. For example, Brugnoli, again following Valla, notes that the blessings of Latin were not limited to ancient Rome but rather were extended to the territories of the empire.

The Romans of old were a most warlike people, troublesome to a host of nations and ruinous to many, but their language was useful and pleasing to all and was therefore the most precious.

It facilitated “the welfare of so many nations, such noble exchange, such great erudition, such great *humanitas*.”⁵⁸ As has often been noted with regard to Valla’s preface to the first book of the *Elegantiae*, language acts here as a metaphor for power.⁵⁹ Ancient Romans spread their language, and their dominion, past the borders of Italy to other peoples, and their greatness was symbolized, perhaps even contained, in their literature. Is Sabellico saying that their descendents in his own Italy, by restoring the ancient language of empire, are now in a position to achieve the same thing? And might the metaphor redound to Venice? After all, Sabellico wrote his dialogue in part to praise the city, which was in the process of attempting to claim this very inheritance.

It is unclear how far this metaphor is meant to be taken, or even if it is being taken in the right direction by these questions. With regard to Valla’s statement *romanum imperium ibi esse, ubi romana lingua dominatur*, John F. D’Amico explained that it indeed communicated a parallel between the power and language of the Roman empire on the one hand and the power and language of the Roman Church on the other.⁶⁰ In his view, though, the metaphor underlying the *Elegantiae* and Valla’s later *Oratio in principio sui studii* (1455) was only a metaphor: “a cultural construct, not a political manifesto.” Valla, the “great enemy of papal territorial claims,” did not seek to empower the papacy as an institution of dominion.⁶¹ Ultimately,

⁵⁸ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 94.2–4: “fuit populus ille ferocissimus pluribus olim gentibus infestus, multis perniciosus, at sermo omnibus utilis ac iucundus atque ob id longe charissimus”; 94.5–6: “tot gentium bona, tam nobile commercium, tantam eruditionem, tantam humanitatem.”

⁵⁹ Valla’s emblematic phrase, as discussed in Chapter 3 above (p. 179), is “ibi namque romanum imperium est ubicumque romana lingua dominatur” (text in *Prosatori latini*, p. 596). Cf. Valla’s dedicatory letter to his Latin translation of Thucydides, in Lorenzo Valla, *Oraciones y Prefacios*, ed. Francesco Adorno (Santiago, 1955), pp. 278–289; as well as its interpretation in Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla. Umanesimo, riforma e controriforma*, pp. 249–256 (translated in *Christianity, Latinity, and Culture*, pp. 280–286). See also note 28 above.

⁶⁰ D’Amico, *Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 118–119.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118. On Valla’s opposition to the temporal power of the Church, see Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla. Umanesimo, riforma e controriforma*, pp. 463–589 (translated in *Christianity, Latinity, and Culture*, pp. 17–143).

“a cultural phenomenon assumed the position once occupied by a political institution.”⁶² For Valla, the proper role of the Church, pope, and curia was to act as the mechanism for spreading the Latin eloquence that he, much more than even Sabellico or Cortesi, both craved and worked to realize. One can think of Valla as standing Augustine on his head: instead of the Roman empire spreading the Good Word throughout its culturo-linguistic realm, he wants the Roman Church to spread good Latin throughout its culturo-religious realm. The pay-off, as Valla sees it, would be a *renovatio* of all culture:

in the Roman language are bound up all the disciplines worthy of a free man . . . Who does not know that as long as it thrives, all studies and the disciplines thrive, but when it falls, they fall too . . . If we exert ourselves just a little more, I am certain that we shall shortly restore the language of Rome, much more so than the city itself, and with it all the disciplines.⁶³

There is no indication that Sabellico intends to take the metaphor any further than Valla did, although it is clear that he applied it in a different way, at once making it more and less geographically expansive. As noted above, Sabellico envisions Latin as an “ancestral right” of the Italians, as a keystone of Italian identity. Thus, unlike Valla, he does not infuse the metaphor of language and cultural empire with a particularly Roman hue. The Church has no place in his scheme. On the other hand, the circumscription of Latinate identity to Italy represents a contraction of Valla’s conception of universal citizenship in the *imperium latinum*. In a jingoistic comparison with the Greeks, Valla exclaims, “among *us*, that is among many nations” – and the nations are clearly the former imperial provinces listed just prior: France, Spain, Germany, etc. – “everyone speaks Latin.” And later, at the emotional climax of the preface, he urges not only the men of his “fatherland” but “all those zealous for eloquence” to join his cause, declaring programmatically: “men of letters and cultivators of the Roman tongue are citizens of Rome – the rest are just resident aliens.”⁶⁴

⁶² D’Amico, *Renaissance Humanism*, p. 119.

⁶³ *Prosatori latini*, p. 598: “in qua lingua [romana] disciplinae cunctae libero homine dignae continentur . . . ; qua vigente quis ignorat studia omnia disciplinasque vigere, occidente occidere? . . . si paulo amplius adnitamur, confido propediem linguam romanam vere plus quam urbem, et cum ea disciplinas omnes, iri restitutum.”

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 598–600: “apud nos, id est apud multas nationes, nemo nisi romane [loquitur] . . . Quare pro mea in patriam pietate, immo adeo in omnes homines, et pro rei magnitudine cunctos facundiae studiosos, velut ex superiore loco libet adhortari evocareque et illis, ut aiunt, bellicum canere. Quousque tandem Quirites (litteratos appello et romanae linguae cultores, qui et vere et soli Quirites sunt, ceteri enim potius inquilini), quousque, inquam, Quirites, urbem nostram, non dico domicilium imperii, sed parentem litterarum, a Gallis captam esse patiemini?”

Sabellico did not agree that all eloquent Latin men, wherever they may live, were citizens of the metaphorical Rome. Only Italians could figuratively say *civis romanus sum*.

As for the possibility that Sabellico intends to connect Latin eloquence with Venetian empire, in light of all the foregoing considerations it seems highly unlikely. Furthermore, it would not have been fitting. The foundation of the so-called “myth of Venice” was laid not on Rome’s imperial heritage or language but rather on a supposed Trojan ancestry, relations with the Byzantine world, and the city’s own peculiar political constitution and maritime empire.⁶⁵ Thus it should not be surprising that *De latinae linguae reparatione* evinces none of the vulgar patriotism that characterizes Sabellico’s *Historiae rerum venetarum*, which was written in the interests of Venetian power and thus is a monumental, mendaciously heroic account of the city’s rise to world domination.⁶⁶ When Venice is praised in *De latinae linguae reparatione* (as we shall see in what follows), it is not for its political regime or military might, not for being a “new Rome,” but with regard to the humanism that flourished there.

Ultimately, the imperial power of Latin is cultural, not political in Sabellico’s dialogue. If the unity with which it endows Italians may one day lead to a politically coherent peninsula, he is silent about how this ought to happen. Instead, his focus is squarely on Latin language and literature. His pride lies in humanism’s success in restoring that aspect of ancient Rome, in overcoming the ostensible barbarism of the Middle Ages. It appears that that triumph, and the cultural unity Italians then enjoyed, sufficed in Sabellico’s mind. And why not? As Biondo shows, it would be wrong to underestimate the emotional power of the sheer concept of a post-barbarian, culturally whole peninsula. For all of Sabellico’s excitement over this achievement, however, he is soberly aware of the gulf between antiquity and his own age. His final position can be adequately summed up with a statement from one of his characters:⁶⁷

Therefore I am accustomed to think myself particularly blessed, and I give thanks to nature that I happened to be born in this very age. Even if the

⁶⁵ Cf. Brown, *Venice and Antiquity*, esp. pp. 32–37, 44; Craig Kallendorf, *Virgil and the Myth of Venice: Books and Readers in the Italian Renaissance* (Oxford, 1999).

⁶⁶ Cf. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography*, pp. 84–86; and Renata Fabbri, “La storiografia veneziana del quattrocento,” in A. Di Stefano et al. (eds.), *La storiografia umanistica*, vol. I, pp. 347–398, at 389–398, esp. 391, where the *Rerum venetarum* is called “una storiografia che costituisse un efficace strumento politico e propagandistico.”

⁶⁷ For an extended treatment of the relative status of antiquity and modernity in *De latinae linguae reparatione*, see Baker, “Labyrinth of Praise and Blame,” pp. 228–230.

language is not flourishing as it once did, or is not of the kind which the Golden Age, in which so many great men shone at once, left to posterity, we see that it is better and has somehow been completely restored.⁶⁸

The great restoration

How exactly did the restoration of Latin come to pass? This is the question which the dialogue as a whole is meant to answer. Its central speeches present not only a lengthy and considered review of the great humanists of the fifteenth century, but also a full account of humanism's development over time. Sabellico has been criticized for lack of historical rigor in this enterprise, and he has been compared unfavorably to Biondo Flavio and especially to Paolo Cortesi.⁶⁹ It is true that Sabellico lacks the chronological awareness of these two with respect to the earliest phase of humanism, but his history of the movement nevertheless embodies a sophisticated and precise historical vision. Sabellico identifies causal factors, describes the mechanisms of change, and accounts for the rate at which that change occurred. Furthermore, he develops a much more nuanced periodization for humanism than has hitherto been realized. Sabellico has likely been underestimated because he does not offer his readers a straightforward narrative; rather he embeds the narrative in the speeches of his two main characters, Benedetto Brugnoli and Battista Guarini. These speeches must be followed closely in their entirety, and special attention must be paid to their many apparently casual observations, in order to reconstruct Sabellico's history of humanism.

In the opening to the demonstrative section of his speech, Brugnoli admits that humanism first appeared in a quite unexpected place, and for us, keeping in mind the visions of our previous authors, it will be doubly

⁶⁸ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 87.12–17: “Soleo iccirco me beatissimum putare ac naturae gratias agere, quod hac potissimum tempestate nasci contigerit, qua si non linguam ipsam florentem ut olim, aut qualem aetas illa aurea, qua tot viri summi una claruere, posteritati tradidit, meliorem ac quodammodo omni ex parte instauratam videremus.” Cf. Baker, “Labyrinth of Praise and Blame,” pp. 229–230.

⁶⁹ See Bottari, “Introduzione” (Sabellico), pp. 46–47, who credits Sabellico with a much less precise historical sense than I argue for here, and Ferraù, “Introduzione,” p. 21, who claims that Sabellico does not differentiate writers accurately by time period and who, in n. 29, imputes to him “certa sordità storica.” Ferraù might be correct in general that Cortesi's dialogue preserves a better sense of chronology than Sabellico's. I disagree, however, about Sabellico's supposed inability to differentiate time periods. Ferraù adduces the grouping of Antonio Tudertino and Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger with Petrarch and Boccaccio in support of this point. In my view, however, the object of this comparison is to criticize these later humanists for not doing much to progress beyond the style of their forerunners. Sabellico aims equally to critique humanists and to trace the history of their movement, and it is only with a grasp of the difference between historical time periods that his criticism makes any sense at all in this case. See also note 104 below.

strange. Manetti saw the renewal of good Latin as beginning with Petrarch. Biondo linked it to the teaching of Giovanni da Ravenna and Manuel Chrysoloras. Cortesi focused on the latter teacher, depicting humanism as a *translatio studii* from Greece back to Italy. Now Sabellico places the rise of humanism squarely in northern Italy and gives the palm to the grammarian and rhetorician Gasparino Barzizza:

Classical Latin, as we have shown, had disappeared and long lay hidden, unknown, neglected, and without any hope of a better fortune. Then, in northern Italy, which hardly anyone would have predicted, scattered sparks of it, still uncertain of catching aflame, began to glow as if from out of some thick and remote darkness.⁷⁰

The first to tend that flame was Gasparino Barzizza. He was famous for his teaching in Venice, Padua, and Milan, “which he undertook more as an auspicious choice than out of any hope of repairing the damage done to Latin.”⁷¹ More importantly, he was “the very first, so I hear, to cast his glance on the shadow of ancient eloquence (for the shadow was all that remained of that once so noble possession).”⁷² Heartened by his discovery of lost works of Cicero, he emended and published them to great fanfare, spurring “many to the cultivation of eloquence with his example and encouragement.”⁷³ Thereafter he emended the newly discovered text of Quintilian and wrote commentaries on Cicero as well as original works such as letters, orations, and a treatise on orthography. His style was lacking, as was natural for his times, but his efforts spawned a broader movement.⁷⁴

It was necessary for the beginning of such a bold undertaking to be weak. But as is often the case, what rises from even modest origins grows over time, and thus it happened that many others followed in the footsteps of those intent on aiding his purpose. In a short time the enterprise advanced to the point where its future promise was equal to its initial determination.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 96.16–20: “Perierant (ut aperte ostendimus) diuque sine nomine, sine cultu, sine spe ulla melioris fortunae romanae litterae in occulto fuerant, quum in cisalpina Gallia, quod vix quisquam futurum putasset, rarae admodum nec satis certae reparandae rei scintillae velut ex densis quibusdam repositisque emicuerent tenebris.”

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 96.24–97.2: “hic Gasparinus . . . multa nominis celebritate litteras docuit, magis foelici consilio quam quod tantae cladis resarciendae spes ulla praetenderetur.”

⁷² *Ibid.*, 97.2–4: “Primus omnium, ut audio, ad veteris eloquentiae umbram – nam ex re tam nobili nil tum praeter id unum supererat – oculos retorsit.”

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 98.6–7: “multosque ad eloquentiae cultum exemplo et hortatione excitavit.”

⁷⁴ The previous paragraph is a summary of *ibid.*, 96.16–99.5.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.14–99.5: “oportuit . . . infirma . . . tam audacis conatus fuisse principia, sed quemadmodum saepe evenire solet, ut quae vel modicis orta sunt initiis maiora in dies accipiant incrementa, ita accidit ut, iam inde multis aliis quidem post alios ad id consilium iuvandum prodeuntibus, brevi res eo processerit, ut non minus iam spei adesset quam ab initio animi fuerat.”

Two more figures now join Barzizza as inspirers of the humanist movement: Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini.⁷⁶ Bruni, as we are used to hearing, is said to have been “of all the men of that time worthy of especial praise.” He was “famous for his studies of philosophy and his eloquence, and no less renowned as an historian.”⁷⁷ Apart from his countless translations, Bruni distinguished himself for his *History of the Florentine People*, thus winning “new praise for reviving the neglected genre of historiography.”⁷⁸ Poggio was Bruni’s equal in expression (*elocutio*), although “ultimately his writings are more remarkable for their charm and fullness than for their elegance.”⁷⁹ His greatest contribution was in seeking out the works of lost authors. His enduring fame stands on his discovery of the first complete text of Quintilian, “the second light of the Latin language,”⁸⁰ which, as we have already seen, Barzizza went on to edit.

The early efforts of Barzizza, Bruni, and Poggio on behalf of humanism, here called *meliora studia*, acted as the true spur to a wider movement:

For many, inspired by the example of these three men and a desire to emulate them, were filled with the hope not only of imitating their excellence (*virtus*), but also, if they were willing to work a bit harder, of surpassing them. With unbelievable determination they directed their energies towards the cultivation of eloquence.⁸¹

Among these were first and foremost Guarino of Verona, Maffeo Vegio, and Pier Paolo Vergerio, followed by Francesco Barbaro, Leonardo Giustinian, Carlo Marsuppini, Vittorino da Feltre, and Biondo Flavio.⁸² They strengthened humanism through the discovery and editing of ancient texts, teaching, translations of Greek literature, and the composition of original works, especially orations, historiography, treatises, fiction, poetry, and letter collections. It is worth pointing out that Sabellico’s Brugnoli mentions two compositions of that age as still enjoying immense

⁷⁶ The following paragraph is a summary of the treatments of Bruni and Poggio: 99.6–105.8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.6–8: “omnium qui sub id tempus extitere . . . praecipua dignus laude occurrit, vir philosophiae studiis et eloquentia clarus, nec in historia minus celebr.”

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.7–102.1: “quod et de Thimagine Fabius: intermissam scribendae historiae industriam eum nova laude reparasse.” As the full citation suggests, Sabellico applies Quintilian’s judgment of Timagenes to Bruni. The precise reference is to Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 10, 1, 75. See Sabellico, *DLLR*, p. 101, n. 2.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.2–104.2: “ut breviter dicam, omnia illius venustate potius et copia probantur quam elegantia.”

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.1–2: “alterum latinae linguae lumen.”

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 106.1–5: “Horum igitur primi illi in meliora studia conatus non nihil sane profuerunt: plerique enim partim exemplo, partim aemulatione in spem maximam adducti non solum illorum trium virtutem imitandi, sed, si paululum anniti vellent, superandi etiam, incredibili studio animum ad eloquentiae cultum erexere.”

⁸² The contribution of these men is recorded in *ibid.*, 106.5–118.6.

popularity in his own: Vergerio's educational treatise *De ingenuis moribus* and Poggio's *Facetiae*, a collection of witty stories.⁸³

This generation of humanists made inroads against linguistic barbarism, but the turning point in the campaign to reclaim ancient eloquence came in the person of the new Camillus, Lorenzo Valla.⁸⁴ In Sabellico's estimation, Valla is important both for his writings and because of the cultural space that he prepared for classical Latin. Valla's greatest single contribution was his massive usage and style manual, the *Elegantiae*, in which "he did not so much treat the precepts of classical Latin as save its sinews."⁸⁵ To that he added translations of Greek historiography and poetry and numerous original works of literature spanning many genres, including letters, orations, and dialogues. Sabellico admits that some people find the character of Valla's original compositions "somewhat rough," but he defends them to the utmost.⁸⁶ Valla and his writings not only represent a great achievement in the renewal of classical Latin, but they are also, according to Sabellico, one of the likely causes for the widespread entrenchment of the broader movement of humanism:

With Valla there were many great men in Rome and the rest of Italy who wrote a somewhat more correct Latin. This might be because they happened to have at hand, so to speak, such an excellent model to imitate, or because it was possible for them to come upon his writings.⁸⁷

Through either personal contact or the proxy of his writings, Valla became the *praeceptor* of the fifteenth century.

Sabellico is the only one of our authors to characterize Valla in this manner, much less to assign him a leading role in the diffusion of humanism. At the same time, he goes to the greatest efforts to explain how that diffusion

⁸³ *De ingenuis moribus*: 106.10–11; *Facetiae*: 102.8–9. Poggio's translation of Diodorus Siculus is also "widely read" (103.1): "Diodorus, quem latinum fecit, vulgo legitur."

⁸⁴ Following is a summary of Sabellico's treatment of Valla, 120.11–124.5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 121.15–122.1: "Tradidit ille Elegantiarum praecepta, romanae linguae nervos, sed nihilo accuratius tradidit quam servavit."

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 124.3–5: "Is there anything purer than this man? Some people also find his letters, orations, and dialogues somewhat rough, but there is no doubt as to their erudition" ("An est eo homine quicquam purius? Sunt qui in his [epistolis, orationibus, dialogis et aliis plerisque] quoque eum duriusculum existunt, sed eruditio illa, ni fallor, est"). Although "duriusculum" could describe the style, as opposed to the tone, of Valla's works, it seems unlikely given the previous sentence ("is there anything purer"), the tone of the whole biography, and the larger role that Valla plays for Sabellico. The characterization of Valla as "duriusculum," if this interpretation is correct, would be the only allusion to the bitterness of his invective and to his unbounded unpopularity in certain circles, which Cortesi describes frankly (Cortesi, *DHD*, 142.5ff.).

⁸⁷ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 124.6–10: "Floruerunt cum eo Romae et reliqua Italia viri multi illustres atque aliquanto in scribendo emendatiores, quod iccirco fortasse illis contigit, quia ad manus, ut dicitur, habuerunt quem potissimum imitarentur, aut, quod evenire potuit, in eius scripta inciderunt."

occurred and how the new canons of style came to be established firmly throughout the peninsula. But while he identifies in Valla an important catalyst, he is careful not to attribute too much to the Roman humanist. Valla is a pivotal figure, but he is only one of several factors responsible for the spread of humanism. Sabellico posits another possible reason for which Italians strove for classical Latin:

And yet the cause could also have been that when they saw that the earlier style of writing was being widely scorned, and that those who did not say everything accurately and with care were taken for barbarians, each one decided that he, too, would produce nothing except what was correct and well thought-out.⁸⁸

After Valla, the leading lights of this generation were men like Francesco Filelfo, whose eloquence extended to a multitude of genres; Pius II, a gifted poet and orator; Leon Battista Alberti, marked by unparalleled powers of expression (*elocutio*); Niccolò Perotti, second only to Valla in his zeal for Roman elegance; Theodore Gaza, who combined moral with linguistic virtue; and Pomponio Leto and Platina, each one a “great lover of antiquity.”⁸⁹

This generation of humanists, however, did not scale the heights of classical eloquence. For despite its determination and dedication to the cause, it was still stunted by the impoverishment of its roots:

Truly, then, the men I am talking about are worthy of some esteem, although their writings have a mien that is not entirely classical. For what we learn when young has a terribly strong grip on the mind. Once established there, it is loath to admit new things, even better ones, into its domain if they seem in any way contrary.⁹⁰

Thus more time was needed, at least another generation, before humanists could fully escape the barbarism of their more recent cultural heritage, and before classical Latin could be restored.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 124.10–14: “Quamquam id quoque esse potuit in causa, ut, ubi illi pristinam scribendi formam vulgo repudiari viderunt ac pro barbaris haberi qui non omnia exacte et accurate dicerent, ipsi etiam quisque pro se ad id animum intenderunt, ut nihil inemendatum, nihil temere in apertum referrent.”

⁸⁹ On Filelfo, see 124.20–128.1; on Pius II, 128.3–130.3; on Alberti, 130.3–9; on Perotti, 133.3–136.4; on Gaza, 143.5–144.4; on Leto and Platina, 148.4–151.1; “great lover of antiquity”: 150.2 (“vetustatis amator egregius”). For a full list of the humanists in this generation, see the Appendix, consulting the names running from Valla to Giuniano Maio.

⁹⁰ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 124.14–19: “verum sic quoque visi sunt hi de quibus loquor aliqua suspitione digni, quamquam eorum scripta aliquid habeant, quod non omnino romanum dici possit: usque adeo tenaciter haerent quae a teneris didicimus, ita inquam ut, ubi semel recepta sint, ne meliora quidem, si aliquo modo contraria videantur, amplius admittant.”

As it turns out, there was also need of a new literary genre, one of an entirely humanistic stamp: the philological commentary, now in printed form.⁹¹ Guarini's speech – and thus the entire second half of the dialogue's inner frame – is specifically dedicated to this next generation of humanists and its fresh literary undertaking. By dividing the history of humanism between his two speakers, Brugnoli and Guarini, and by having them single out commentaries as the hinge in that history, Sabellico emphasizes that that history is itself best understood as divided between periods before and after the commentary, which correspond to two distinct stages: one focused on recovery, the other on perfection.⁹² Despite the several levels of development explained by Brugnoli, it becomes clear in Guarini's speech that the advent of the printed philological commentary heralds a new era in humanism.

The first great commentator, according to the dialogue's Guarini, was one of Sabellico's own masters, Domizio Calderini, a Veronese humanist active in Rome in the 1470s as a teacher of rhetoric and Greek and as a papal secretary (to Sixtus IV).⁹³ He is treated here as the next preeminent figure in humanism's history after Gasparino Barzizza and Lorenzo Valla.⁹⁴ The first was responsible for beginning the movement of humanism, the second for reviving proper classical Latin, and now Calderini begins the tradition of commentary, i.e., of establishing correct text editions and explaining their often abstruse language and content. Guarini's speech notes the contributions of twenty-eight commentators, praising not only the greats like Calderini, Giorgio Merula, and Angelo Poliziano, but also the up-and-coming generation of philologists like Cinzio da Ceneda and

⁹¹ On the development and nature of the humanistic commentary, see August Buck and Otto Herding (eds.), *Der Kommentar in der Renaissance* (Boppard, 1975), esp. Buck's "Einführung," pp. 7–19; Francesco Lo Monaco, "Alcune osservazioni sui commenti umanistici ai classici nel secondo Quattrocento," in O. Besomi and C. Caruso (eds.), *Il commento ai testi, Atti del seminario di Ascona. 2–9 ottobre 1989* (Basel, 1992), pp. 103–154; Marianne Pade (ed.), *On Renaissance Commentaries* (Hildesheim, 2005); and now Karl A.E. Enenkel and Henk Nellen (eds.), *Neo-Latin Commentaries and the Management of Knowledge in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period (1300–1700)* (Leuven, 2013). See also note 186 below.

⁹² See Baker, "Labyrinth of Praise and Blame," pp. 224–226.

⁹³ For Calderini, see Perosa, "Calderini, Domizio"; and Campanelli, *Polemiche e filologia*; further bibliography in Sabellico, *DLLR*, p. 172, n. 2. It is worth noting that Calderini was a student of Brugnoli, and, as mentioned above, a teacher of Sabellico.

⁹⁴ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 172.1–4: "As Brugnoli ascribed the proper method of speaking to Lorenzo's efforts, thus I attribute to Domizio the excellent description of the ancient poets and writers" ("Domitio veronensi . . . cui, quemadmodum Prunulus modo laurentianis studiis emendatissimam hanc loquendi rationem, ita praecipuam poetarum veterumque scriptorum enarrationem audeo ascribere").

Giosippo Faustino – humanists who for the most part now reside in scholarly limbo.⁹⁵

For Sabellico, the wide proliferation of commentaries through the invention of printing represents the final step in humanism's evolution, as well as the foundation for permanently establishing its program of restoring classical Latin. It is the *sine qua non* of humanism's success, providing the two things lacking at the founding of the movement for the fulfillment of its project: knowledge and communication. As we shall see later in greater detail,⁹⁶ printed commentaries served three valuable, intertwined functions. They acted as (1) durable repositories for the knowledge recovered by individual humanists; (2) places for the accumulation of knowledge (when one humanist built on the work of his predecessors); and (3) vehicles for teaching that did not require the physical presence of the humanist who wrote them. Their circulation allowed humanism to move faster and to more places than before, and their mass production and durability meant that they enabled the lasting restoration of classical Latin which their contents helped to effect. Printed commentaries were like an army of itinerant teachers of the kind described by Biondo Flavio, only much larger and more effective.

Incidentally, Sabellico's assumption that philological commentaries can be unproblematically characterized as massively mobile teachers corroborates one of Robert Black's major conclusions regarding education in the Italian Renaissance, namely that grammar was emphatically not a moral art and that Latin education, including that at humanist schools, had no, or at least no major, moral component.⁹⁷ Launching his own research from the surprisingly similar observations of Paul Grendler, Paul Gehl, and Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine to the effect that humanist commentaries focused mostly on grammatical, rhetorical, and poetic concerns but showed little or no trace of moral considerations, Black found that the same was the case in the marginal glosses of school textbooks. He thus concluded that, on the basis of what we can know from the available physical evidence, moral lessons were not taught in the pre- or non-university classroom in

⁹⁵ For a complete list, see the Appendix, consulting the names from Domizio Calderini to the end. For the poet and commentator Cinzio da Ceneda, whose real name was Pietro Leoni, see Sabellico, *DLLR*, 160.2–161.1 (with bibliography), as well as Laura Casarsa, "Pietro Leoni (Cinzio da Ceneda)," *Repertorium Pomponianum* (www.repertoriumpomponianum.it/pomponiani/cinzio-da-ceneda.htm). For Giosippo, a teacher in Belluno, see Sabellico, *DLLR*, 200.1–202.4, and Pierio Valeriano, *Piero Valeriano on the Ill Fortune of Learned Men: A Renaissance Humanist and His World*, ed. and tr. Julia Haig Gaisser (Ann Arbor, 1999), p. 289 (with bibliography).

⁹⁶ This topic is also treated in Baker, "Labyrinth of Praise and Blame," pp. 225–226.

⁹⁷ Black, *Humanism and Education*, esp. ch. 5. For what follows, see pp. 24–33.

late medieval and Renaissance Italy. As we saw in Chapter 2, Grafton and Jardine explained that the gap between humanist educational rhetoric and the tedium of classroom practice could only be bridged by a charismatic teacher. Sabellico, however, assumes that commentaries can do the job of teaching the great Latin authors in the absence of a Guarino or a Luigi Marsili – and he puts the arguments for this position into the mouth of Guarino’s own son! He does so, furthermore, albeit acknowledging that the humanist educators Guarino and Vittorino displayed remarkable virtue and passed it on to their students.⁹⁸ If Sabellico thinks that philological commentaries can replace humanist teachers and even spread humanism more effectively than actual human beings, we must conclude that he did not consider moral lessons part of the package.

This account of humanism, which traces its development through several distinct stages from origin to perfection – perfection in the related senses of both evolutionary completion and teleological success – is of a mixed character. On the one hand it is highly sophisticated, indeed the most sophisticated of all those examined so far. It charts the intangible process by which a cultural movement comes into its own, noting the roles of founders and heroes but also paying keen attention to popular perception, will, and participation. It accounts for humanism’s gradual evolution with a view to a number of necessary, interrelated factors of varying importance. It evinces farsighted understanding of the import of a new technology. It is also exceptionally balanced, in that Sabellico refrains from taking sides in the vicious polemics that characterize so much of humanist culture.⁹⁹ For example, he does not favor Valla at the expense of Poggio, or Calderini at the expense of Perotti, despite the antagonism between them (and their followers) and his own obvious opinion on their relative worth.¹⁰⁰ Nor does Sabellico take the opportunity to detract from Giorgio Merula, with whom he personally had strained relations.¹⁰¹ Instead, like Cortesi he evaluates humanists on the basis of strict linguistic criteria, and this (in addition to

⁹⁸ See below, p. 224.

⁹⁹ Cf. Bottari, “Introduzione” (Sabellico), pp. 52–53, 64, although Bottari ultimately takes a different stance, with which I disagree, on p. 34: “considerate le caratteristiche e le finalità dell’opera, Sabellico si sforza di mantenere un certo equilibrio, un’imparzialità di giudizio che, comunque, non riesce a raggiungere.” For Sabellico’s generally moderate, well-balanced character, see *ibid.*, p. 16. On humanist polemics, see Rao, *Curmudgeons in High Dudgeon*; Helmrath, “Streitkultur”; and Marc Laureys, “Per una storia dell’invettiva umanistica,” *Studi umanistici piceni*, 23 (2003), pp. 9–30.

¹⁰⁰ See Sabellico, *DLLR*, 121.5–124.5 (on Valla); 102.4–105.8 (on Poggio); 171.15–176.7 (on Calderini); 133.3–136.4 (on Perotti); and related notes.

¹⁰¹ For his treatment of Merula, see *ibid.*, 177.1–178.5. On their strained relations, see *ibid.*, p. 177, n. 1.

several decades of additional hindsight) is what gives him keener insight into the modern development of Latin than that possessed by Manetti, Piccolomini, Facio, and even Biondo.

On the other hand, Sabellico's personal and civic allegiances, as well as his determination to present humanism in a specific way, give his work an idiosyncratic character, marked by a myopic appreciation for Roman antiquity, a factual flexibility with regard to early humanism, and a decidedly northern, and especially Venetian, point of view. First, the choice of Barzizza as the founder of humanism is somewhat puzzling. We have been partially prepared for it by Biondo's description of Barzizza's role in the movement's beginnings, but the status accorded him by Sabellico is entirely novel.¹⁰² Furthermore, certain key figures, such as Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Salutati, and above all Chrysoloras, are surprisingly absent. The first, whom Manetti lavishly praises as a humanist, and whose relative unimportance Cortesi felt obliged to explain, has no place in this dialogue.¹⁰³ The second, often considered by modern scholars to be the founder of humanism, is said, in an aside, to have contributed something to the recovery of Latin but to have achieved fame primarily for his vernacular poetry.¹⁰⁴ Boccaccio receives half a line and no overt praise.¹⁰⁵ Salutati, who plays the part of Piccolomini's whipping boy, Manetti's early hero, and Cortesi's nearly forgotten forerunner, here has no part at all.¹⁰⁶ And Chrysoloras, a founding figure for Piccolomini, Biondo, Facio, and Cortesi, only appears obliquely in Sabellico's dialogue; he is mentioned as the teacher of several of the early humanists, but his own accomplishments are nowhere recounted.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² See Chapter 1 above, p. 60. Facio, *DVI*, p. 28, also says that Barzizza was "one of the most important for reawakening long-dormant eloquence" ("Gasparinus Bergomensis unus ex iis vel in primis fuit, qui consopitam diu eloquentiam excitaverunt").

¹⁰³ For Dante in Manetti, see Chapter 2, *passim*; in Cortesi, see Chapter 3 above, pp. 141–142, 158, 180–181.

¹⁰⁴ Specifically, Sabellico denigrates the style of Lapo da Castiglionchio, Antonio Pacini da Todi (Tudertino), and others by saying that "their writings were somehow useful to Latin studies, but no more useful in recovering what had been lost than what Petrarch and Boccaccio had written much earlier" (119.1–4: "Florentini Lapi, Antonii tudertini et aliorum quorundam scripta aliquid certe commodi latinis studiis attulerunt, sed ad id quod amissum erat reparandum non magis utilia quam quae non paucis ante annis Franciscus Petrarcha et Ioannes Bocatius scripsere"). He then continues (119.4–120.1): "Franciscus Petrarcha . . . clarus . . . rythmis eminens." On the *fortuna* of Petrarch's Latin and vernacular poetry, see Sabellico, *DLLR*, p. 120, n. 1, with related bibliography; and Hankins, "Petrarch and the Canon of Neo-Latin Literature."

¹⁰⁵ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 119.4–5: "Ioannes Bocatius . . . clarus . . . mythica historia." Thus he is remembered only for his *De genealogia deorum*.

¹⁰⁶ For Salutati in Piccolomini, see Chapter 1 above, pp. 40–41; in Manetti, Chapter 2, pp. 112–113, 116, 121; in Cortesi, Chapter 3, pp. 143–144.

¹⁰⁷ For Chrysoloras in Piccolomini, see Chapter 1 above, pp. 40–42; in Biondo, Chapter 1, p. 59; in Facio, Chapter 1, pp. 73–74; in Cortesi, Chapter 3, pp. 144–146, 158. Sabellico mentions

Chrysoloras' marginalization must result at least in part from Sabellico's vision of humanism as the renewal of ancient *Roman* language and literature. Sabellico had to have been aware of the Byzantine's importance, considering the latter's long residence in Venice. What is more, after introducing Guarino of Verona as one of the first humanists to be spurred on by Barzizza, Bruni, and Poggio, Sabellico states: "Whatever greatness he achieved, no one doubts that he owed it to Chrysoloras."¹⁰⁸ Thus Sabellico seems to grasp, along lines similar to Piccolomini, Facio, and Cortesi, the role played by Chrysoloras in early efforts to approximate classical Latin. Yet he seems intent on obfuscating this contribution. As opposed to Cortesi, who trumpets the return of a shared classical literary culture from Greece to Italy, Sabellico mutes the part of Hellas. This is all the more surprising considering the great importance Greek Byzantium had for Venetian identity and the very real influence of Byzantine culture on Venice in the Renaissance, including on the humanist milieu.¹⁰⁹ It may be explained, however, by Sabellico's Roman roots and his closeness to Valla. As noted in Chapter 3, Cortesi's formation in Pomponio Leto's circle probably bore some responsibility for his marginalization of the Greek language when portraying the humanism of his own time. Sabellico, as we shall see, is even more radical than Cortesi in his disregard of Greek. Thus the model of Valla was probably even more important. In the *Elegantiae*, to whose vision of linguistic and cultural *renovatio* Sabellico is so heavily indebted, Valla wages an overt polemic against Greek. He argues that the language of Rome is superior precisely because it is unitary and widespread and thus can act as a conduit for a single, sophisticated culture worldwide. Greek, on the other hand, is splintered into the dialects and Koine: "the Greeks cannot agree amongst themselves, much less hope to bring others to their own language."¹¹⁰ Unlike Latin, Greek is not a culturally imperial tongue. With this in mind, it makes more sense that Byzantines who made names for themselves in Italy in the fifteenth century – men like Bessarion, George of Trebizond, and Argyropoulos – are given short shrift in the

Chrysoloras as the teacher of Vergerio and Francesco Barbaro (107.2) and of Guarino (III.2–4), and as Gianmario Filelfo's grandfather (139.1–2). Marsuppini's Greek is said to have been so good that he seemed like a student of Chrysoloras (III.1–2: "dicitur et ipse grace tractasse studia, ut merito suspicari possis hunc quoque ex Chrysolorae officina depromptum").

¹⁰⁸ Sabellico, *DLLR*, III.3–4: "quantuscumque fuit, ab eo [Chrysolora] factum nemo est qui dubitet."

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Marianne Pade, *The Reception of Plutarch's Lives in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 2007), vol. I, pp. 180–182.

¹¹⁰ *Prosatori latini*, pp. 596–598, quote at 598: "Graeci inter se consentire non possunt, nedum alios ad sermonem suum se perducturos sperent."

dialogue.¹¹¹ Only Theodore Gaza, one of Cortesi's heroes, receives fuller treatment and special, albeit generic, praise: "It is not an overstatement to say that there was nothing more cultivated, nothing more chaste than this man."¹¹²

Similarly idiosyncratic is Sabellico's quirky account of humanism's origins. Despite all the respect we should have for his understanding of the mechanisms of historical development, at times he does not seem to be in command of the basic facts of chronology. Consider the attribution to Barzizza of influence on Leonardo Bruni, who was only nine years younger and actually made his first contributions to humanism (his earliest translations from Greek, ca. 1401¹¹³) before Barzizza began his teaching career (1403 in Padua), or on Guarino, who sought out Manuel Chrysoloras in Greece as early as 1388. It is even more absurd to think of Poggio (b. 1380) as influencing Guarino. On the other hand, perhaps Sabellico composed the triad of Barzizza–Bruni–Poggio to be representative of generic contributions to humanism rather than because he believed it constituted a precise chronology: Barzizza was the teacher and textual critic, Bruni the historiographer and translator, and Poggio the manuscript-hunter. There is, moreover, a perfect symmetry in identifying Barzizza, one of the first humanists to write commentaries on ancient authors, as the founder of a movement that purportedly reached its perfection in printed commentaries. If this interpretation is correct, the profiles of these individuals act, at least in part, as an ideal characterization of humanism in its early stages and show the roots of its later glory, which for Sabellico was bound up entirely in its revival of Roman, not Greek, antiquity (hence the demotion of Guarino and the expulsion of Chrysoloras from the canon). There is also a much simpler and reductive explanation for the order of the early humanists in the dialogue: Sabellico may simply have been following the example of his friend Jacopo Foresti's *Supplementum chronicarum* (1483), a massive universal chronicle that also presented Barzizza, Bruni, and Poggio in this order of historical importance.¹¹⁴ As for Foresti's preference for

¹¹¹ Bessarion and Trapezunzios get a combined five lines (Sabellico, *DLLR*, 130.9–132.1); Argyropoulos is not treated but is mentioned as having instructed Pietro Marsi in philosophy (181.5–182.1).

¹¹² His biography runs a total of ten lines, which is an above-average length: 143.5–144.4. Praise: 143.9–10 ("Nihil eo viro cultius, nihil castius, nec vereor ne ambitione id a nobis dictum videri possit").

¹¹³ For Bruni's early Greek translations, see Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, vol. II, pp. 376–378.

¹¹⁴ Noted in Bottari, "Introduzione" (Sabellico), p. 62. Krautter, "Marcus Antonius," pp. 640 and 645, n. 22, points out that the correspondence continues beyond the initial three and also accounts (although not exactly) for the perhaps odd ordering of Maffeo Vegio, Pier Paolo Vergerio, Francesco Barbaro, Leonardo Giustinian, Carlo Marsuppini.

Barzizza, it is likely explained by patriotic motives: both men were from Bergamo.¹¹⁵

Finally, like Foresti's, Sabellico's choices also have something to do with his personal attachment to a place: Venice. Despite protestations to the contrary within the dialogue,¹¹⁶ the work's general tenor confirms as much, and it seems clear that *De latinae linguae reparatione* belonged to a group of writings that the humanist penned to ingratiate himself to his adopted home.¹¹⁷ This helps to explain better Sabellico's attribution of the foundation of humanism to Gasparino Barzizza, who was famous for his teaching in the Veneto, especially as a university teacher in Padua (appointed by the Venetian Senate) and as a private tutor in Venice itself, where one of his students was the first great Venetian humanist, Francesco Barbaro (whose nephew, Ermolao, is also praised in the dialogue and is an auditor to the disputation between Brugnoli and Guarini).¹¹⁸ It also accords with the concentration of Veneto humanists profiled before the advent of Valla,¹¹⁹ as well as with the focus in Guarini's half of the disputation on commentaries and printed works, which flourished in Venice at the time of the dialogue's composition.¹²⁰ Yet it would be wrong to make too much of Venetian sympathies. For example, if the point of the dialogue were simply to praise Venice, we might expect some mention of Chrysoloras' association with the city or a more laudatory biography of George of Trebizond, who taught in Venice during two distinct periods and was one of the first to teach humanistic studies publicly there.¹²¹ Instead Chrysoloras is almost totally ignored, while George's tenure in the city is passed over in silence and he is compared unfavorably to Bessarion.¹²² It is difficult to believe, if the praise of Venice really had been Sabellico's central purpose, that the internal politics of Roman humanism or his own personal grudge with Greek would have prompted him to leave out such details.

¹¹⁵ See Krautter, "Marcus Antonius," p. 640.

¹¹⁶ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 142.1–6 and 147.2–5. Such statements, of course, give him away.

¹¹⁷ On Sabellico's Venetian focus and the place of *De latinae linguae reparatione* in a larger literary project in praise of Venice, see Bottari, "Introduzione" (Sabellico), pp. 9, 12, 32–34. See also Tateo, *I miti*, pp. 211 and 188, who warns, however, against taking Sabellico's association with Venice too far.

¹¹⁸ For Barzizza's teaching career, see Mercer, *The Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza*; and Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, pp. 207–209.

¹¹⁹ See above, pp. 202–203 and below, note 159.

¹²⁰ See Virginia Cox, "Rhetoric and Humanism in Quattrocento Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 56:3 (2003), pp. 652–694, esp. 675–678. For Sabellico's use of the dialogue to showcase humanism in Venice, see Baker, "Labyrinth of Praise and Blame," pp. 216–220.

¹²¹ On George's teaching in Venice and its later status among humanists there, see Cox, "Rhetoric and Humanism," pp. 661–665.

¹²² Sabellico, *DLLR*, 131.1–132.1. Probably due to George's spirited attacks on Bessarion, an ally of Sabellico's teacher, Leto.

As interesting as it is to search for the personal, intellectual, and civic allegiances that shaped Sabellico's work, it is also fruitful to consider how *De latinae linguae reparatione* can help us see past our own scholarly commitments and habits. For now let us focus on the issues raised in this section. First, Barzizza has long been recognized as an important figure, if not a turning point, in early Quattrocento humanism, but he has been relatively little studied and his works are not widely available.¹²³ Should we be paying more attention to Barzizza, not to mention a squadron of other figures flying underneath our radar, when trying to come to terms with humanism and its appeal in the fifteenth century? More important than the fate of one individual is the status of an entire city. Sabellico reminds us that, contrary to what was once widely assumed, Venice was a great center of humanism by the turn of the sixteenth century, and a very important one for the integrity of classical Latin.¹²⁴ And finally Greek. We proudly tell our students, and rightly so, that the recovery and proliferation of Greek in the Latin West was one of the great achievements of Renaissance humanism. But Sabellico tells us what we are wont to forget, namely that Greek was seldom valued in its own right but rather was seen as a handmaiden to Latin. Indeed, Sabellico even whispers the dirty little secret of humanism: that many (most?) humanists were relieved to forego Greek as long as Latin translations were available.

Latinae linguae reparatores

As in the texts of our previous authors, the humanists of *De latinae linguae reparatione* are called *docti viri* (learned men) and *viri illustres* (illustrious men). A specific individual might be more properly an *orator*, a *poeta*, perhaps even a *vetustatis amator* (lover of antiquity), but as a group the humanists are *bonarum litterarum studiosi* (devotees of good literature – synonymous with *nostratium litterarum studiosi*, or devotees of our native

¹²³ As early as Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums*, pp. 220–222, Barzizza is described as instrumental for moving humanism beyond the simple continuation of Petrarch's legacy. Unlike Sabellico, however, Voigt identifies Barzizza's main contribution to be his equal emphasis on Greek and Latin studies. For recent studies of Barzizza, see Chapter 1 above, note 32. An attempt is underway to publish his *De orthographia*, but so far only a *censimento* of the manuscripts has appeared: Giliola Barbero, *L'Orthographia di Gasparino Barzizza* (Messina, 2008). See also Letizia A. Panizza, "Gasparino Barzizza's Commentaries on Seneca's Letters," *Traditio*, 33 (1977), pp. 297–358; G.W. Pigman, III, "Barzizza's Studies of Cicero," *Rinascimento*, 2nd ser., 21 (1981), 123–163; and Pigman, "Barzizza's Treatise on Imitation," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance*, 44 (1982), 341–352.

¹²⁴ See Tateo, *I miti*, p. 212; King, *Venetian Humanism, passim*; and the insightful discussion in Kallendorf, *Virgil and the Myth of Venice*, pp. 18–30.

literature). They are those *qui recenti saeculo aliquid in communem latinae linguae usum edidissent* (who in recent times have made a contribution to the Latin language).¹²⁵ The humanists are engaged in *recognoscenda vetustate* (investigating antiquity) and in *meliora studia* (better studies), elsewhere called *humanarum litterarum studia* (study of humane letters) and *eloquentiae cultum* (the cultivation of eloquence). They are responsible for *successus hic litterarum* (this success of letters) and *praesens studiorum successus* (the present flourishing of our studies), which consists in *latinam linguam iuvare* (aiding the Latin language – equivalent to *romanas litteras iuvare*, or aiding classical Latin), *romanam linguam servare* (saving classical Latin), *tam inepte loqui desinere* (ceasing to speak clumsily), *latinam linguam recipere* (recovering the Latin language), *romanas litteras suscitari* (waking classical literature), *multo emendatiorem latinam linguam habere* (possessing a much more correct Latin), *romanus sermo suum veterem splendorem recipere* (recovering the ancient splendor of classical Latin), and *romanae litterae in antiquum statum restitui* (restoring classical Latin to its ancient state).¹²⁶

The humanists who populate Sabellico's *De latinae linguae reparatione* are plainly united first and foremost by their devotion to classical Latin eloquence, and necessarily also by a passion for antiquity. Perhaps as a corollary (as in Cortesi), they are not necessarily devoted to any particular discipline(s) or area(s) of study, not even those commonly associated with the *studia humanitatis*. The very nature of their enterprise and of ancient Roman literature dictated that they would of course spend most of their time with grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy, but they were not limited to them. The keen observer will have noticed that *studia humanitatis* was not one of the very many ways listed above to say humanism (although *humanarum litterarum studia* does, admittedly, come close). It is unwise to make too much of an omission, but this one seems significant. On the one hand, it suggests that Sabellico did not perceive a necessary or even a strong association between humanism and the bibliographic cycle of the *studia humanitatis* or the teaching of the

¹²⁵ Some occurrences, with no attempt at completeness, are: *docti viri*: 83.4; *viri illustres*: 124.6; *orator*: 125.2, 128.4; *poeta*: 124.20, 125.2, 128.3; *amator vetustatis*: 150.2; *bonarum litterarum studiosi*: 203.1–2; *nostratum litterarum studiosi*: 91.9–10; *qui recenti . . . usum edidissent*: 91.7–8.

¹²⁶ These references are rather complete but not exhaustive: *meliora studia*: 106.1; *eloquentiae cultum*: 106.5; *in recognoscenda vetustate*: 149.6; *humanarum litterarum studia*: 142.7; *successus hic litterarum*: 87.23–24; *praesens studiorum successus*: 83.22; *latinam linguam iuvare*: 87.28; *romanas litteras iuvare*: 87.1; *romanam linguam servare*: 83.10–12; *tam inepte loqui desinere*: 83.24; *latinam linguam recipere*: 84.5–6; *romanas litteras suscitari*: 171.11; *multo emendatiorem . . . linguam habere*: 175.2–3; *romanus sermo . . . splendorem recipere*: 168.6; *romanae litterae . . . statum restitui*: 156.5–157.1.

so-called *humanista* at universities.¹²⁷ This is important not only because such an association was central to Kristeller's understanding of humanism, but even more so because this is precisely the period when *studia humanitatis* began to have the exclusive meaning of a clearly defined cycle of academic disciplines.¹²⁸ One wonders if Sabellico is not consciously avoiding a term that suggests an alien institutional and educational context. On the other hand, Sabellico's usage harmonizes with the fact that his humanists engaged eloquently in *studia* and literary genres that largely remained outside the proper province of humanism in the other authors we have considered in this study.

One is devotional literature, in which Sabellico's Brugnoli praises Pietro Barozzi, bishop of Padua, for his excellent prose and poetry. Of his poetry he says, "I have never seen anything more weighty, more pious, and more in line with religion"; of his prose: "I very much desire to see his work *On Dying Well* . . . , in which I hear he has arranged everything" – note the all too obvious pun – "divinely."¹²⁹ In addition, the Carmelite Battista Spagnoli (better known as Mantuanus) – master of theology, later prior general of his order, and eventually declared blessed – is here singled out as one of the greatest living poets, especially for his *carmina* on the life of the Virgin and on despising death.¹³⁰

Another new setting for humanistic virtuosity, and somewhat surprising, considering that it leaves no space for poetry and little for rhetoric, is mathematics. Yet we read that "no one, as far as I know, treated mathematics more elegantly" than Leon Battista Alberti.¹³¹ Previous authors had noted humanists' expertise in mathematics, and Facio specifically mentions Alberti's, but here the case is different. Instead of presenting mathematics as something to be pursued in addition to humanism, Sabellico treats it as a proper context for "elegant" language.

¹²⁷ Cf. Campana, "The Origin of the Word 'Humanist'"; and Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism," p. 366 (reprinted in *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, p. 99).

¹²⁸ Kohl, "The Changing Concept of the *studia humanitatis*."

¹²⁹ On Barozzi, 142.6–143.4. The quotations come from 143.1–4: "nihil gravius vidi unquam, nihil magis pium magisque religioni accommodatum. Cupio vehementer videre opus ab eo de optimo genere moriendi . . . , in quo audio omnia divine ab eo disposita." For the identification of the "opus . . . de optimo genere moriendi" with *De modo bene moriendi*, see Sabellico, *DLLR*, p. 143, n. 2.

¹³⁰ For Sabellico's treatment of Mantuanus, see Sabellico, *DLLR*, 161.1–162.2. The specific poems mentioned are identified in *ibid.*, p. 162, n. 1, as the *Partenice Mariana* and *De contemnenda morte*. On Mantuanus, see John F. D'Amico, "Baptista Mantuanus of Mantua," in Bietenholz and Deutscher (eds.), *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, vol. II, p. 375; and Lee Piepho, *Holofernes' Mantuan: Italian Humanism in Early Modern England* (New York, 2001).

¹³¹ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 130.4–5: "Nullus, quod sciam, nostra tempestate mathematicas artes elegantius tractavit." For Facio, see Chapter 1 above, p. 81.

More importantly, in *De latinae linguae reparatione* humanism comes to embrace natural philosophy and theology. Francesco Filelfo's "works clearly show that he did not shrink from the study of philosophy,"¹³² and Ermolao Barbaro and Marsilio Ficino brought good Latin to bear on philosophy, "a rather weighty study,"¹³³ with their translations of Themistius, Aristotle, and Plato:

In my view, they show – and this is something that no one else since the decline of eloquence had done – that the subject matter itself was not to blame for the fact that philosophers down to our age have not spoken classical Latin; rather, it was the fault of the previous translators of Greek philosophy.¹³⁴

That the Latin of the scholastic Aristotelians was not Aristotle's fault had been a commonplace since Petrarch, and Bruni had often criticized scholastic translators (especially in his *De interpretatione recta*) and had already brought humanistic eloquence to bear on Aristotle's *Ethics* in his own new translation. Nevertheless, Barbaro and Ficino represent something new: their translations have ostensibly revealed the eloquence of metaphysics and cosmology, not just of moral and political philosophy. In theology (*divinae litterae*), "which is cultivated more and more every day," Pico was the central figure. No one was "more refined or elegant," and "no one since Lactantius and Jerome was better at safeguarding Latin elegance in this genre."¹³⁵

Once again Sabellico makes us rethink a notion sacred to Kristeller, namely that "the Italian humanists on the whole were neither good nor bad philosophers, but no philosophers at all."¹³⁶ For this reason Kristeller

¹³² Sabellico, *DLLR*, 125.3–126.1: "nec a studiis philosophiae abhorrens, quod aperte eius opera declarant." For the nature of these studies, see *ibid.*, pp. 125–126, n. 3. It is possible, however, that Sabellico simply means traditionally humanistic moral philosophy, as is suggested by his explicit comparison of Filelfo to Seneca, 127.5–7.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 145.2: "studiis tamen gravioribus."

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.2–147.2: "Praestiterunt meo iudicio – quod post inclinatam eloquentiam nemo – ostenderuntque hi non rem, sed eos qui eiusmodi opera antea in latinum vertere in causa fuisse, quod qui ad nostram usque aetatem philosophati sunt parum romanae sint locuti."

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.5–9: "divinae litterae in dies . . . magis excoluntur . . . Quid enim . . . Mirandulani Pici Heptaplo vidimus aut cultius aut elegantius? Nemo . . . post Lactantium et Hieronymum melius in eo scribendi genere latinam custodivit elegantiam."

¹³⁶ On the separation between humanism and philosophy, see Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, pp. 28–32, 90–91, quotation at 91. For Kristeller's treatment of Ficino and Pico, see Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford, 1964), pp. 37–71, esp. 37–38: "I cannot agree with those historians who want to see in Ficino and Renaissance Platonism nothing but a special sector or phase of humanism; I prefer to consider Renaissance Platonism a distinct movement within the broader context of Renaissance philosophy."

mustered Ficino and Pico out of the ranks of the humanists. Their contemporary Sabellico, however, accepted them into the fold. Yet he did not do so on the basis of the works that have made them so important to modern scholars, such as the *Platonic Theology* and the *Oration on the Dignity of Man*,¹³⁷ but rather because of their efforts in translating ancient philosophical and theological texts into elegant Latin. Admittedly, Ficino is not known for the purity of his style, but the fact remains that Sabellico portrays both Ficino and Pico as humanists precisely for making significant contributions to the restoration of classical Latin. What is fascinating is that there need be no essential disharmony between Sabellico's and Kristeller's views. As Kristeller himself once noted, "[Ficino's] scholarly activity as a translator and commentator of Plato, Plotinus, and other Greek philosophical writers may be regarded as a continuation of the work done by his humanist predecessors."¹³⁸ The main difference between Kristeller and Sabellico, then, lies in which aspect of Ficino's literary production each considered most important. For Kristeller it was Ficino's original contribution to philosophical thought. For Sabellico it was his work as a translator of philosophical texts, and thus he considered Ficino, at least in this respect, a humanist like himself.

The case should not, however, be overstated. Ultimately, the pursuits of natural philosophy, theology, and devotional literature are not central to humanism and are rather a specialty interest. Of the eighty-one humanists treated in the dialogue, only the six just now mentioned are specifically noted for engaging in them.¹³⁹ Furthermore, as we have just seen, what seems important to Sabellico is not so much a contribution to the matter, or content, of natural philosophy or theology, but rather that a humanist engage in them eloquently. Therefore he cannot be thought of as lending support to Garin's view that humanists "understood that they were doing

¹³⁷ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno, e scritti vari*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence, 1942); Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, ed. James Hankins with William Bowen, tr. Michael J.B. Allen and John Warden, 6 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 2001–2006).

¹³⁸ Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers*, p. 37.

¹³⁹ Two earlier humanists, it is true, are cited for their study of philosophy, but it is clear from the context that moral, not natural, philosophy is meant, or that philosophy predated and did not continue after their interest in humanism. See the treatments of Bruni (99.6–102.5), whose reputation as "famous for his philosophical studies" (99.7–8: "philosophiae studiis . . . clarus") mostly likely relies on his *Isagogicon* or on his numerous translations of Plato, Plutarch, and Aristotle; and of Pier Paolo Vergerio (106.10–107.1), whose "very weighty judgments" are attributed to his earlier study of philosophy, which is explicitly said to have preceded, and not continued with, his humanistic activity (106.13–107.1: "gravissimisque respersus sententiis, utpote qui philosophiae prius operam dederit quam ad scribendum venisset").

the work of philosophers.”¹⁴⁰ Instead he praises the purity of Barbaro’s and Ficino’s philosophical translations, Pico’s “safeguarding of Latin elegance” in theology, and Barozzi’s “divine arrangement” in devotional literature. He does not praise their arguments or ideas. As a movement to restore classical Latin, then, humanism will comprehend these genres to the extent that it reforms their modes of expression. Or, put another way, individuals will engage in these areas *as humanists* to the extent that they do so eloquently. Thus, although Sabellico clearly thought humanism transcended the standard disciplines of the *studia humanitatis* in its project to save Latin, nevertheless humanists were primarily literary men. And although he did not exclude philosophy and religion from humanism proper, they did not often constitute any given humanist’s field of endeavor. As for the other rival disciplines of law and medicine, they are, as usual, not mentioned in relation to humanism.

The importance and reach of classical Latin are by now clear, but what about the place of other languages, ancient and modern, in humanism? As our other authors have led us to expect, Greek sits at the right hand of Latin in Sabellico’s linguistic hierarchy. Knowledge of it seems to be a given, albeit seldom a stated attribute, of nearly all the humanists treated in the dialogue, and translations from Greek into Latin form an important component of the revival of classical Latin before Valla. Yet Greek has at best a relative value. Sabellico’s reticence regarding the contribution of Byzantine émigrés and the Greek studies they brought with them extends to the language itself. On the one hand, one’s sense when reading the dialogue is that Greek is by now so common that it need no longer be singled out as a special accomplishment. On the other hand, Sabellico’s humanists display a demonstrably greater interest in Latin than in Greek authors, especially in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. In the second half of the dialogue, which deals with humanists from the 1470s on and especially with living and up-and-coming ones, and which is specifically devoted to commentaries, there is less emphasis on translations from Greek, and most of the commentaries mentioned are of Latin, not Greek, authors. Insofar as the second half of the dialogue acts as an apology for the commentary genre, it does so emphatically with reference to the Latin tradition.¹⁴¹ Considering,

¹⁴⁰ Garin, *Medioevo e rinascimento*, p. 8: “gli umanisti . . . intesero fare opera di filosofi” (translation mine).

¹⁴¹ The vast majority of commentaries mentioned in the second speech are of Latin poets. There are only two mentions of commentaries on Greek literature: Domizio Calderini’s work on Sappho (172.6), and a vague reference to the contribution of Poliziano’s forthcoming *Miscellanea* to

then, that Sabellico portrays printed commentaries as the natural end of humanism, Greek's value drops even more. Furthermore, Sabellico's only observation on the Greek language is a dubious one. Regarding Theodore Gaza he muses:

He was a Greek, as I said, but when I read his Latin translations of Theophrastus or Aristotle . . . , I cannot stop being amazed and wondering whether we get our astounding eloquence from the Greeks, or whether Theodore got his from us.¹⁴²

The question is as polemical as it is rhetorical. In the preface to a translation of Aristotle, Gaza had impugned Latin for being lexically impoverished with respect to Greek, only to be unmasked by Poliziano for having plagiarized significant portions of that very Latin translation.¹⁴³ It is worth noting, finally, that Sabellico's own knowledge of Greek was likely either weak or nonexistent. He claims in one letter to have studied the language for nine years, but this seems to be rather a literary trope than a precise reckoning of his effort. He sprinkles Greek quotations, words, and spellings throughout his writings (e.g., *fama* is consistently spelled *phama* in the dialogue, and the two titles of his universal history have the scent of Greek: *Enneades* and *Rhapsodiae historiarum*), but he never translated anything from Greek, nor did he compose anything in Greek, and his philological work betrays a poor knowledge of the language.¹⁴⁴

Greek and Latin (194.7–195.3). It might also be mentioned that Sabellico does not have in mind commentaries of Greek philosophy, such as Bruni's and Acciaiuoli's of Aristotle, or Ficino's creative compositions based on Plato. Cf. also Lowry, *World of Aldus*, pp. 73–74, who notes the total absence of Greek scholarship in Venice ca. 1490.

¹⁴² Sabellico, *DLLR*, 143.10–144.4: “Fuit ille graecus, ut dixi; verum quum eius Theophrastum lego, quem, dico, latinum fecit, aut Aristotelis libros . . . , admirari non desino ac dubitare utrum incredibilem illam verborum proprietatem nostri a Graecis acceperint an ille a nostris potius.”

¹⁴³ See John Monfasani, “Angelo Poliziano, Aldo Manuzio, Theodore Gaza, George of Trebizond, and Chapter 90 of the *Miscellaneorum centuria prima* (with an edition and translation),” in Mazzocco (ed.), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 243–265; Monfasani, *Greeks and Latins in Renaissance Italy: Studies on Humanism and Philosophy in the 15th Century* (Aldershot, 2004), esp. ch. 6 and p. 211; Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, pp. 76–78. By all accounts, both then and now, Gaza was an excellent Latinist, and he was considered the king of Latin translators from Greek. Until, that is, Poliziano, for whom Sabellico had the greatest respect, revealed in Chapter 90 of the first century of his *Miscellanea* (printed in 1489, just as Sabellico was composing his dialogue) that Gaza had plagiarized significant portions of his translation of Aristotle's *De animalibus* from the previous translation of George of Trebizond. It is in the preface to this translation that Gaza claimed (as Poliziano reports) that “we Latins suffer from the defect of having many fewer terms for things than do the Greeks” (Monfasani, “Angelo Poliziano,” p. 263, n. 56 quotes Gaza's original preface). Thus in ostensibly filling in the gaps of the Latin language, he had needed to rely on the Latin of another. That the Latin plagiarized by Gaza was the work of another Byzantine and not of an Italian did not keep Sabellico from making his joke.

¹⁴⁴ Greek words appear, e.g., in the dedicatory letter of *DLLR* (83.21). On the role of Greek in Sabellico's philological work, see Chavasse, “The *studia humanitatis*,” pp. 33–34; and Pellegrini, “Studiare

Other languages fare worse with respect to Latin. Regarding ancient languages, Pico is praised for being “the only one of the moderns to join Greek and Aramaic with Latin studies.”¹⁴⁵ This is the only mention of an ancient language other than Latin or Greek in the whole text. The remaining instances regard the vernacular, and they are not approving. For example, Sabellico’s Guarini criticizes Cristoforo Landino for his translation of Pliny the Elder, and mistakenly for one of Livy as well,¹⁴⁶ into Tuscan. His negative judgment rests as much on the quality of this particular effort as on the general inappropriateness of vernacular translation from Latin:

You would wish . . . he had put his most blessed eloquence to a greater use than wishing to serve the ignorant multitude. He sinfully made Livy and Pliny, two lights of the Latin language, available to the common man . . . [His] Pliny is harsher as a Tuscan than he was as a Roman . . . and Livy has lost nearly all of that distinctive “Paduanness” for which Pollio criticized him.¹⁴⁷

Sabellico’s disdain for the “ignorant multitude” is obvious, as is his disapproval of the translation of a Latin text into the vernacular, since it has thereby been made to lose something essential to its original character. At best, vernacular translation appears to be a wasteful distraction. The text continues:

Perhaps [Landino] had the interests of his native language in mind, thinking that in this way it would be spread far and wide. His intention was good, for we owe a great deal to our fatherland, but I think he could have ennobled himself, his fatherland, and the whole Tuscan name better *with his own*

Svetonio,” p. 57. The possibility that Sabellico translated several speeches from Thucydides’ *History* is raised by Marianne Pade, “Thucydides,” in *Catalogus Translationum Commentariorumque: Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries. Annotated Lists and Guides* (Washington, DC, 1960–), vol. VIII, pp. 103–181, at 128–130, but the passages adduced indicate, to my mind, rather an industriously manipulative cribbing of Valla’s earlier work.

¹⁴⁵ Sabellico, *DLR*, 148.1–3: “contigisse illi adhuc uni, quod et recentiorum nemini, ut graeca et chaldaea studia romanis iunxerit.”

¹⁴⁶ No such translation is known. See *ibid.*, pp. 185–186, n. 1.

¹⁴⁷ For the full assessment of Landino’s vernacular translation: 185.4–187.6. This quotation is 185.4–186.2: “velles . . . beatissimam illam dicendi facultatem ad maiorem usum comparatam quam ut imperitae multitudini servire voluisset. Titum Livium et Plinium, duo latinae linguae lumina, non sine piculi suspitione omnibus vulgavit . . . duriorum esse Plinium iam tuscum factum quam antea romanus fuisset . . . ut patavinitas illa, quam Pollio in Livio depraehenderat, quantum in eo viro fuerit vix extet amplius.” For Pollio’s criticism of Livy for incorporating too much of his native Paduan, or Patavinian, dialect into his Latin, see Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 1, 5, 56 and 8, 1, 3. On Landino’s translation of Pliny, see Riccardo Fubini, “Cristoforo Landino, le *Disputationes camaldulenses* e il volgarizzamento di Plinio: questioni di cronologia e di interpretazione,” in Fubini, *Quattrocento fiorentino. Politica, diplomazia, cultura* (Pisa: Pacini, 1996), pp. 303–332.

work and effort. And he really could have, for nothing is fuller, nothing more suited to treating all the parts of eloquence, than his natural ability.¹⁴⁸

Sabellico draws attention to Landino's much advertised belief that vernacular writing was a patriotic duty of Florentines.¹⁴⁹ As we saw in Chapter 2, the vernacular had a long and hallowed tradition in Florence, and Landino had made a name for himself by putting Tuscan on par with Latin. By the time of Sabellico's writing, Tuscan had been applied for decades not only to original works of prose and poetry but also to Latin classics and even to humanist works; among the most popular vernacular authors in Florence was Leonardo Bruni in translation.¹⁵⁰ Incidentally, the translation of Pliny to which Sabellico refers was undertaken at the behest of Ferrante of Naples. When Ferrante asked one of his own humanists, Giovanni Brancati, to ascertain its quality, the reaction was nothing less than horror at the impenetrable "Etruscan" text. Sabellico himself could not have phrased Brancati's punchy response better: "I derive far more pleasure from a single verse of Latin than from all the books translated in this fashion."¹⁵¹

Sabellico does approve, however, of Landino's patriotic sentiment. But what does he mean by "with his own work and effort?" Francesco Tateo¹⁵² has argued that Sabellico specifically means Latin historiography here, and that the proper way for Landino to ennoble Florence was the one Sabellico chose for Venice: to write its history in Latin, and thus to spread its fame to a wider audience than that reachable by any vernacular. Such a deprecatory attitude towards the vernacular is also found in the description of the Venetian Leonardo Giustinian, whose works, it is lamented, "easily demonstrate what he could have contributed to Latin if he had not dedicated himself to vernacular poetry."¹⁵³ Ultimately, the vernacular, if perhaps of worthy service to the unlettered, was a diversion from the real task of humanists: to contribute to the restoration of classical Latin.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 187.1–6: "habuit fortassis ille patrii sermonis rationem, quem longe lateque propagatum iri eo modo putavit; recte quidem; nam multa et magna patriae debemus, sed meo iudicio rectius se patriam omneque tuscum nomen proprio labore et industria nobilitare potuisset; potuisset quidem, nam nihil est ea natura uberius, nihil ad omnes eloquentiae partes tractandas aptius" (emphasis mine).

¹⁴⁹ See Mazzocco, *Linguistic Theories*, p. 97.

¹⁵⁰ Hankins, "Humanism in the Vernacular," pp. 20–29; Witt, *Footsteps*, pp. 453–454; McLaughlin, "Humanism and Italian Literature."

¹⁵¹ See Bentley, *Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples*, pp. 69–71, quotation at 70.

¹⁵² Tateo, *I miti*, ch. 8: "Venezia e la storia esemplare di Livio in Marcantonio Sabellico" (pp. 181–221), esp. 212–213.

¹⁵³ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 109.7–9: "facile declarant quid ille in communem linguae usum afferre potuisset, si non ad rhythmos animum adiecisset."

¹⁵⁴ Guglielmo Bottari takes a narrower view, arguing that Sabellico had "scarsa simpatia" for Tuscan (Sabellico, *DLLR*, pp. 185–186, n. 1) and that he had nothing but disdain for the vernacular (Bottari, "Introduzione" [Sabellico], p. 80). In support he cites a textual variant to *DLLR*, 202.5–12 – which

Despite their unconcern with Italian vernaculars, the humanists' single-minded restoration of Latin is, in Sabellico's vision, emphatically a geographically and culturally Italian enterprise. We have already seen that good Latin properly belongs to Italy as an inheritance of the Roman empire, and that it was claimed by Sabellico's humanists as "an ancestral right." We have also read the section of Guarini's peroration where he reinforces the essential link between Italy and good Latin: "Many peoples are ignorant of literature and thus do not even desire it. Italy, however, not only perceived this divine gift but also gave it to . . . others."¹⁵⁵ If literature was the cultural lifeblood of the Italians, it should come as no surprise that foreigners play almost no role in the dialogue. Only one foreigner – Coriolano Cippico of Dalmatia, who celebrated the deeds of Doge Pietro Mocenigo – is mentioned for having contributed to Latin literature. Echoing Cortesi's snide disposal of Janus Pannonius, Sabellico remarks, "hardly anyone in this age would have expected eloquence from that coast of the Adriatic."¹⁵⁶ Cippico's participation in humanism is all the more surprising to Sabellico, since, as Brugnoli explains, he is too old to have been a student of Palladio Negri, "who in recent years has restored classical Latin to its ancient state in that country."¹⁵⁷ Despite the consistent presence of Italian humanists abroad – from England to Hungary – throughout the fifteenth century, and despite the appreciable number of foreigners who had studied in humanist schools by Sabellico's time, the dialogue mentions only one other person

does not represent Sabellico's final intention, however – in which it is suggested that humanists of low quality should stick to vernacular composition rather than publishing bad Latin. The final version omits mention of the vernacular and says simply that such humanists should be more careful in their publications. Bottari concludes there that this was "un intervento d'occasione che finiva col tradire, in fondo, l'originario e autentico pensiero dell'autore, che nei confronti del volgare non sembra mai aver avuto il benché minimo ripensamento." The context (202.12–203.4) of the passage in question, however, does not to my mind regard the vernacular, but rather Latin. Guarini says that bad Latin infuriates humanists and makes them disdain works whose content is otherwise worthy. Thus the meaning of the variant would actually seem to suggest that the vernacular is an appropriate vehicle for passing on information, albeit one unworthy of true humanists, rather than good for nothing at all. However this may be, the upshot for humanism is the same: the vernacular has no place in it.

¹⁵⁵ See above, note 47.

¹⁵⁶ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 156.1–2: "vix ex dalmatica illa ora dicendi facultatem hac quisquam tempestate expectasset." In point of fact, although he was born in Traù, his eloquence came from Padua, where he received his training. See Fabbri, "La storiografia veneziana del quattrocento," p. 374. Cippico's book was entitled *Petri Mocenici imperatoris gestorum libri tres*; text in *Per la memorialistica veneziana in latino del Quattrocento: Filippo da Rimini, Francesco Contrarini, Coriolano Cippico*, ed. Renata Fabbri (Padua, 1988), pp. 163–230, which also contains extended biographical and bibliographical information on him, pp. 139–161.

¹⁵⁷ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 156.4–157.1: "nec est ut ad Palladium Nigrum – per quem proximis annis romanae in ea terra litterae in antiquum sunt statum restitutae – eius studia referas." On Negri (also known as Palladio Fosco), a teacher best known for his commentary on Catullus, see *ibid.* and 200.1ff., as well as Gaisser, *Catullus and His Renaissance Readers*, pp. 97–108.

besides Negri as having taken humanism abroad: Filippo Buonaccorsi, whose work in Poland is recorded.¹⁵⁸

Within Italy, Sabellico has, as we have seen, a decidedly northern perspective and focuses especially on Venice. He places the origins of humanism in northern Italy and identifies its founder in Gasparino Barzizza, who was born near Bergamo and taught in Venice, Padua, and Milan. Furthermore, the plurality of the early humanists he praises hail from north of the Po. They make up the vast majority of the central figures before Valla¹⁵⁹ and a fair number afterward. In addition, the dialogue begins with an explicit praise of Venice, central to which is its book and specifically its print culture.¹⁶⁰ Finally, the setting of the dialogue is intended in part to highlight the nature of Venetian humanism: exuberant, established, ubiquitous, free, and exceptional.¹⁶¹ Brugnoli's and Guarini's speeches arise out of an informal discussion started spontaneously by a group of learned patricians, whose various business concerns at the Doge's palace happen to bring them together. This is a far cry from Cortesi's dialogue, set in the intimacy of a private estate and with no learned audience. In Venice humanism seems to be on the tip of everyone's tongue.¹⁶²

After Venice, Sabellico explicitly singles out Rome, Florence, and Padua as great centers of humanism, his Guarini calling them "the three most famous schools of Italy."¹⁶³ Naples, too, although never named, comes to the fore through the treatments of Panormita and Pontano.¹⁶⁴ Several scholars have suggested the possibility that Sabellico pursued an anti-Florentine polemic, but this seems unlikely to me.¹⁶⁵ Not only is Florence one of "the most famous schools of Italy," but two individuals with close ties to the city – Bruni and Poggio¹⁶⁶ – stand near the head of humanism's family

¹⁵⁸ On the diffusion of Italian humanism, see Chapter 3 above, note 142. For the poet and historian Buonaccorsi, also known as Callimaco Esperiente, see Sabellico, *DLLR*, 165.1–166.1; and, in addition to the bibliography in *ibid.*, see Harold B. Segel, *Renaissance Culture in Poland: The Rise of Humanism, 1470–1543* (Ithaca, 1989), ch. 2; and Michael T. Tworek, "Filippo Buonaccorsi," *Repertorium Pomponianum* (www.repertoriumpomponianum.it/pomponiani/buonaccorsi_filippo.htm).

¹⁵⁹ Specifically, Barzizza, Maffeo Veggio, Pier Paolo Vergerio, Francesco Barbaro, Leonardo Giustinian, Guarino Veronese, and Vittorino da Feltre, making seven out of the fifteen humanists named before Valla. Their greater comparative importance is clear from the length and content of their treatment. Sabellico, *DLLR*, 85.1ff. See Baker, "Labyrinth of Praise and Blame," pp. 216–217.

¹⁶⁰ Described in Sabellico, *DLLR*, 88.22ff. See Baker, "Labyrinth of Praise and Blame," pp. 216–220.

¹⁶¹ Sabellico's portrayal is confirmed by Lowry, *World of Aldus*, p. 189. Cf. also note 124 above.

¹⁶² Sabellico, *DLLR*, 191.6–7: "tribus celeberrimis Italiae gymnasiis."

¹⁶³ On Panormita, 124.20ff., 128.1ff.; on Pontano, 157.4ff.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Bottari, "Introduzione" (Sabellico), p. 54–55, and 185–186, n. 1; Krautter, "Marcus Antonius," p. 640; Tateo, *I miti*, p. 210.

¹⁶⁵ Neither was born in Florence, but their reputations and careers were firmly bound to the city. On Bruni, 99.6ff.; on Poggio, 102.4ff.

tree and receive extremely high praise. Furthermore, the leading humanists of Laurentian Florence – Ficino, Pico, Poliziano, and Bartolomeo della Fonte¹⁶⁷ – come off quite well. Landino, it is true, does not, but Sabellico's criticism regards only Landino's penchant for the vernacular; otherwise, he praises his powerful eloquence.¹⁶⁸ Finally, if Sabellico had wanted to marginalize contemporary Florence, it would have been better to ignore it like Cortesi¹⁶⁹ rather than saying of Poliziano, "regarding his poetry, there is no one, unless I am mistaken, of those considered famous today whom you could prefer to him."¹⁷⁰ Ultimately, despite his distaste for its vernacular politics, it is hard to think of Sabellico as an enemy of Florence.

Within that holistic view, Rome is certainly the most important humanist center after Venice and even rivals it.¹⁷¹ Valla, the great turning point in humanism, was born and educated in Rome and, despite two decades of employment all over Italy, ended his career as an influential figure in Nicholas V's circle. Domizio Calderini, the fountainhead of the commentary tradition, was also active in Rome. Moreover, Sabellico received his own humanist training under the direction of Calderini and Pomponio Leto, the latter of whom was also a student of Lorenzo Valla.¹⁷² Thus Sabellico's own humanism traces its roots to Rome and is explicitly said in the dialogue to be in a direct line of intellectual descent from the second Camillus. Therefore this dialogue, in large part a praise of Venetian humanism, is the product of Roman humanism. And although Sabellico likely aims to show that Rome has passed the torch to Venice, which as the rising star of printing plays the central role in the new kind of philological humanism, Rome had not yet relinquished its importance in the effort to restore classical Latin.¹⁷³

We have now seen where and to what purpose humanists cultivated Latin eloquence, but in what capacity did they do so? Unfortunately for us, *De latinae linguae reparatione* gives scant information on the employment of humanists, preferring to highlight the fruit of their *otium*

¹⁶⁷ On Ficino, 145.2ff.; on Pico, 147.5ff.; on Poliziano, 193.2ff.; on della Fonte, professor at the Florentine Studio, 187.7–8, and see Raffaella Zaccaria, "Della Fonte (Fonzio), Bartolomeo," in *DBI*, vol. XXXVI (1988), pp. 808–814.

¹⁶⁸ On Landino, see above, pp. 219–220, and Sabellico, *DLLR*, 184.4ff.

¹⁶⁹ Noted, although given less importance, in Bottari, "Introduzione" (Sabellico), p. 55.

¹⁷⁰ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 194.5–7: "etenim si virtutes eius carminis attendas, non est, nisi me opinio fallit, quem ex iis qui hodie illustres habentur illi praeferre possis."

¹⁷¹ The importance of Rome has also been noted in Bottari, "Introduzione" (Sabellico), pp. 12, 22.

¹⁷² Cf. Sabellico, *DLLR*, 148.5–6: "Sabellici nostri praeceptor, et . . . Laurentii Vallensis auditor."

¹⁷³ Tateo, *I miti*, p. 212, emphasizes what he calls the "asse Roma–Venezia" in supporting Latin against the vernacular, whose vogue was increasing in the other great traditional center of humanism, Florence.

rather than the details of their *negotium*. We can, it is true, delineate three sources of income – ecclesiastical benefices, secretarial work, and especially teaching¹⁷⁴ – but the references to them are desultory and, except in the last case, they receive no further elaboration. The role of patronage, which emerged so clearly in the works of Facio and Cortesi, remains essentially hidden here.¹⁷⁵ Nor does the dialogue give any indication of how the up-and-coming generation makes a living. It is doubtful, however, that they lived on textual editing alone.¹⁷⁶ More important than any specific kind of employment, the humanists in Sabellico's dialogue are defined, categorized, and judged according to their contributions to Latin, which, as we are now used to hearing, they made in two basic forms: teaching and writing.¹⁷⁷ The one often crossed the line into the other – good examples are Valla's *Elegantiae* and the commentary genre – but they can easily be considered separately.

The importance of the early humanistic schools comes to the fore in Sabellico's treatment of the beloved teachers Gasparino Barzizza, Guarino Veronese, and Vittorino da Feltre, but the content of the education they offered is not as clear. Barzizza is featured as a teacher of rhetoric and grammar, which corresponds with the description of humanist teaching before Valla seen above: "they taught rhetoric, and some taught grammar with a bit more care."¹⁷⁸ Guarino is specifically said to have instructed his students in both Latin and Greek. Moreover, both Guarino and Vittorino are praised for passing on not only their knowledge but also their outstanding moral virtue.¹⁷⁹

For the proliferation of good Latin style, however, schooling seems to have played less of a role than the availability of proper models of

¹⁷⁴ The dialogue specifically identifies the following humanists with these employments: ecclesiastics: Pietro Barozzi, bishop of Padua (142.8), Battista Spagnoli, a Carmelite (161.1–2); secretaries and chancellors: Bruni and Poggio, both employed as papal secretaries and then chancellors of Florence (99.8ff., 105.6ff.); teachers: Barzizza (98.25ff.), Guarino (111.4ff.), Vittorino (113.8ff.), Valla (149.1), Trapezuntius (131.4–132.1), Leto (148.5), Palladio Negri (156.4ff.), Giorgio Merula (178.2–3).

¹⁷⁵ Sabellico's speakers allude to patronage a few times, but they never say anything specific. The allusions are to the speaker Battista Guarini's and his father's service to the Este in Ferrara (89.2–4, 115.6), Beccadelli's to Alfonso in Naples and Filelfo's to the Visconti in Milan (124.21–125.1), and Vittorino's to the Ganzaga in Manuta (115.6).

¹⁷⁶ On the limited remuneration available to editors of printed volumes, see Brian Richardson, *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy: The Editor and the Vernacular Text, 1470–1600* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 15–18.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Guarini's peroration, 202.7–9: "Brugnoli's purpose was to talk about those men who by either teaching or writing something elegantly made the Latin language fuller and more correct" ("Sed de his ille [Prunulus] dicere voluit, qui aliquid aut praecipiendo aut eleganter tradendo latinum sermonem locupletiore[m] emendat[i]oremque reddidere").

¹⁷⁸ See note 49 above. ¹⁷⁹ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 111.3–113.8 (virtue at 113.8–114.1).

imitation, plentifully available in humanist writings. Translations from Greek into Latin compose a large, if not the largest, share of humanist literary production mentioned in the dialogue up through the mid-fifteenth century. Although Sabellico praises the early humanists, and even some later ones, for these efforts, he considered them less worthy than original compositions. He shows his preference early in the dialogue, after a summary of Bruni's translations: "but these might seem minor accomplishments, for it is easy to be well spoken in someone else's book, but difficult in one's own."¹⁸⁰ Similarly, Marsilio Ficino and Ermolao Barbaro "seem to me to have won a great and new kind of praise, although only in translating the works of others."¹⁸¹

The hierarchy of original compositions is difficult to establish and shifts over time. In the earliest stage of humanism, from Barzizza to Valla, historiography stands out as a great achievement, and treatises also receive a large amount of attention.¹⁸² In Valla's generation, humanists continue with these genres but are also said to produce orations, commentaries, letters, and dialogues. The poetry of the whole period seems not to have achieved the same level of excellence as prose, though, with fewer *poetae* than *oratores* treated and even fewer praised as highly.¹⁸³ In the second half of the fifteenth century (especially from the 1470s), in contrast, the literary landscape is dominated by poetry and commentaries.¹⁸⁴ We have already seen that Sabellico believes the printed commentary to be the final turning point in humanism's history, and he dedicates a substantial portion of the dialogue to illustrating its status and importance. Considering as well that none of our other authors so much as mention commentaries, it will therefore be worth our while to investigate Sabellico's treatment of them in full.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 100.6–101.2: "Sed haec minora videri possunt: facile est in alieno libro esse disertum, sed in suo difficile."

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 144.4–145.2: "Grandem novamque praeterea laudem consecuti mihi videntur, et si in alienis rebus interpretandis."

¹⁸² Historiography is given great weight in 120.6–7. Bruni is praised for reviving the genre (101.2ff.), and Biondo (although not without criticism) for contributing so much to it (115.9ff.); for treatises, see Vergerio (106.10ff.) and F. Barbaro (108.1ff.)

¹⁸³ Vegio is criticized for his style (106.10) and Beccadelli (128.1–2), Filelfo (127.1–7), Porcelio (136.5–6), and Andrelini and Cleofilo (163.1–164.2) for their content. Sabellico preferred epic and religious poetry and had an aversion to lascivious verse. See Bottari, "Introduzione" (Sabellico), p. 43.

¹⁸⁴ Of the twenty humanists in the second half of the dialogue about whom specific information is given (ten more are simply named), fourteen are said to have written commentaries, and seven poetry. Also, Brugnoli characterizes commentaries as "a kind of gloss on the verses of the poets" and Guarini speaks specifically about "commentaries on the ancient poets" (see below, p. 226), although commentaries on prose writers are also mentioned in the dialogue.

Commentaries, printing, and libraries

The wide proliferation and popularity of commentaries through printing was indeed something new in humanism, although the genre itself was not. Commentaries, albeit of a different sort and with a different focus, had been a standard scholastic genre of the Middle Ages.¹⁸⁵ In the Renaissance the commentary genre exploded, although scholars are only now beginning to explore the full reach and impact of this (until recently) vastly understudied text type.¹⁸⁶ One important novelty of the humanists was to apply commentaries to the task of textual criticism, using them as a locus for lexical but also historical and encyclopedic explanation. Sabellico's portrait of Barzizza, by mentioning the teacher's commentaries on Cicero, shows that the genre was alive and well in humanism's early stages. Nevertheless, at the end of the fifteenth century the commentary's importance had not yet achieved universal recognition or acceptance, as Sabellico stresses by putting the following observations into the mouth of his Guarini:

First of all, friends, I think we should ask – and I see it is a common issue for learned men to debate – whether it is worth the effort at all to provide ourselves with commentaries on the ancient poets. Although many people exult in having composed them, others not only do not praise them but even disparage them.¹⁸⁷

Cortesi, writing at approximately the same time as Sabellico, treated some of the same humanists who are here celebrated for their commentaries – above all Domizio Calderini and Niccolò Perotti – either without emphasizing those works or not mentioning them at all.¹⁸⁸ And Sabellico, finally,

¹⁸⁵ See Buck, "Einführung," p. 7. Medieval commentaries were not philological, which is precisely the kind Sabellico has in mind, and they had a more restricted canon of ancient literary authors as their subject.

¹⁸⁶ In addition to the bibliography in note 91 above, see: Karl A.E. Enenkel (ed.), *Transformations of the Classics via Early Modern Commentaries* (Leiden, 2013); Michael Weichenhan, "Gassendis Kommentierung von Diogenes' Laertius *Vitae philosophorum* X – ein Beispiel für die Verwissenschaftlichung der Antike?," in Thomas Wabel and Michael Weichenhan (eds.), *Kommentare. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven auf eine wissenschaftliche Praxis* (Frankfurt am Main, 2011), pp. 91–125; Ralph Hafner and Markus Völkel (eds.), *Der Kommentar in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 2006); Glenn Most (ed.), *Commentaries – Kommentare* (Göttingen, 1999); Deborah Parker, *Commentary and Ideology: Dante in the Renaissance* (Durham, NC, 1993).

¹⁸⁷ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 169.21–170.3: "Primum itaque omnium illud quaerendum arbitror, viri amicissimi, de quo inter doctos quaeri solere video, fuerit ne operae precium id facere, ut in veteres poetas, quod plerique praestitisse gloriantur, commentarios ullos haberemus. Nec desunt qui id non solum non laudent, sed vituperent."

¹⁸⁸ Cortesi does not mention Perotti's philological work and only does so casually with regard to Calderini. See Cortesi, *DHD*, 159.6–161.10. Cortesi also alludes to commentaries at the end of his dialogue but does not indicate what their special importance might be. See *ibid.*, 187.16–19.

has his character Benedetto Brugnoli, who was in fact one of the most authoritative humanists in Venice, confess his ignorance of commentaries, saying:

I knowingly passed over many who have pursued a totally different tack in our enterprise, and who might seem to have done not less but, as I think, maybe even more for Latin studies than those whom I did mention. But since the burden of advancing age has caused me to abstain from reading their works, which are a kind of gloss on the verses of the poets, I have nothing to say about them.¹⁸⁹

Brugnoli then chooses Guarini to take up the charge, asking him to “discuss in turn what you think about this new literary genre, to which many men of our time dedicate all their energy.”¹⁹⁰

Accordingly, Guarini begins his speech with a digression on commentaries that considers their value *pro et contra*, ultimately declaiming an apology for the genre. The arguments against commentaries stack up fast and furious, condemning them as an ignoble crutch incommensurate with the grand aspirations of humanism.¹⁹¹ One objection is that there are already too many books available, and more are not needed. Another is that true humanists will find things out for themselves rather than rely on other people’s work. The ancients, furthermore, are more reliable than the moderns anyway. Moreover, commentaries stunt the mind, which under their influence stops discovering, contriving (*comminisci* – the root verb of the word *commentary*), and thinking for itself. And finally the most damning criticism: commentaries allow the young and ignorant to embark on teaching literature without the proper education and judgment. Such teachers make a mess of their subject matter, fill their students with foolish ideas and false opinions (so as to appear to have at least taught something), and thus instill in them a hatred of Latin authors before they are of an age to understand them.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 168.7–13: “Praeterii, sciens, multos qui diversa omnino meditatione ad hoc ipsum efficiendum usi, non minus, ut arbitror, ac nescio an etiam plus aliquid quam illi quorum mentionem feci, latinis studiis profuisse videri possunt, verum quia illorum quasi glossemata quaedam poetarum carminibus cohaerentia, quorum lectione ob aetatem iam ingravescentem consulto abstineo, non habeo quid de his dicere possim.” If the historical Benedetto Brugnoli was actually ignorant of commentaries ca. 1489, he would eventually fill this lacuna by editing one of the greatest commentaries of the age: Niccolò Perotti’s *Cornucopia*. See King, *Venetian Humanism*, p. 342.

¹⁹⁰ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 168.34–36: “quae de novo hoc scribendi genere ad quod multi nostra tempestate omne suum studium adiecere sentias ordine disserueris.”

¹⁹¹ Lowry, *World of Aldus*, pp. 37–38, considers the criticism of commentaries to be the definitive side of the debate and does not mention their defense.

¹⁹² The objections to commentaries listed above are summarized from 169.21–170.28.

Guarini then offers a definitive defense of printed commentaries, portraying them as manifoldly useful, indeed indispensable, to humanism. There was not always a surfeit of books, he notes, and it was not always possible for everyone to furnish whole libraries at will. Furthermore, not everyone has the same energy, the same industry in finding things out, the same diligence in preserving discoveries, and the same judgment in emending texts. In addition, commentaries conserve the advances of past humanists and thus make the restoration of good Latin permanent; without commentaries, hard-won progress likely would have been lost, and no one would speak classical Latin any longer. As for the audacity of the ignorant and their abuse of commentaries, such is, alas, the nature of things; there will always be people who want to seem more learned than they really are.¹⁹³ Two further planks of the defense then emerge from the ensuing description of humanist commentators. First, the obvious: commentaries make difficult texts more accessible. Thus we read that Francesco Maturanzio's commentary on Statius' *Achilleid* made the text "more manageable" (*tractabiliorem*). And Ubertino Clerico da Crescentino's commentary on Cicero's *Epistolae ad Familiares* cleared up much of the difficulty of the letters' language, revealed their hidden aspects, and – as if responding directly to one of the initial charges against commentaries – opened up a once-intimidating work to the young.¹⁹⁴ Second, commentaries act as a locus for accumulating, if not compounding, knowledge over time. Guarini notes, for example, that Domizio Calderini's commentaries on Martial and Juvenal built on the earlier work of Niccolò Perotti, Pomponio Leto, and Angelo Sabino, and Oliviero d'Arzignano's commentary on Valerius Maximus was based heavily on Ognibene da Lonigo.¹⁹⁵

This mini-debate tells us not only about the uses and disadvantages of commentaries but also about the world of humanism in which they served such an important function. It was a world deluged with books and dotted with personal libraries. These books conserved not only the writings of the ancients but also the advances of the moderns. In doing so, books also seem to be on the verge, at least, of replacing people as the primary carriers of humanism. What had once been the privilege of a few to learn from

¹⁹³ The foregoing arguments are summarized from 170.28–171.14.

¹⁹⁴ On Maturanzio, a longtime teacher in Vicenza, 187.9–13 (with bibliography); on Clerico, a teacher of rhetoric at the University of Pavia, 187.13–188.9 (with bibliography).

¹⁹⁵ On Calderini, 175.3–176.4; on d'Arzignano, a grammar teacher who had studied with Ognibene in Vicenza, 188.9–189.3 (with bibliography). Regarding Calderini, Sabellico's intention is clearly to defend him against charges that he stole, or plagiarized, the work of others in his commentaries: "he not only related what he might seem to have gotten from them, but he also added many things on his own account, things incredibly useful to know" (176.2–4: "non solum quae ex illis accepisse videri potuit est executus, verum per se multa etiam addidit atque ea ipsa cognitu utilissima").

gifted teachers in a classroom setting or through direct personal contact was now available to a broader group in book form.¹⁹⁶ And thus what Guarino and Vittorino had once imparted while living, Calderini and his ilk could provide even after death. As Sabellico presents it, these paper teachers were instrumental in completing humanism's mission to restore classical Latin, as the knowledge recovered through such great effort, if not conserved in widely available commentaries, ultimately would have been lost yet again with the death of crucial individuals. The implication is that the artisan-like tradition of passing on knowledge and skills, which had prevailed in humanism down to Sabellico's time, never would have sufficed for enduring linguistic change. Finally, commentaries transformed the very nature of humanism, making it possible for efforts that were once uncoordinated, confined to a more or less local setting, and often pursued by several individuals simultaneously without each other's knowledge, to become concentrated, streamlined, rationalized, and universally available. In a phrase, group philology facilitated the broad restoration of the language and literature of classical antiquity.¹⁹⁷

The dialogue emphasizes that behind these developments lay the technological innovation of printing, which enabled the mass diffusion of commentaries and thus also of this new type of philologically oriented humanism. According to Guarini, it is "this astonishing and fast method of printing that has brought forth such a great mass of books in the last few years."¹⁹⁸ Moreover, since the commentaries to which Sabellico refers were generally printed with the texts they undertook to explain, their spread accelerated the increasingly broad diffusion of the literature of classical antiquity. If the proliferation of commentaries and the availability of authoritative text editions represent the mature phase of humanism, the one in which the project of restoring classical Latin can finally be completed and assured for the future (as Guarini argues), then printing is the mechanism behind humanism's enduring success. Sabellico was one of the first humanists to successfully use the nascent technology to his professional and economic benefit,¹⁹⁹ and he fully understood its potential, still hidden from most, for the movement of humanism in general.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Lowry, *World of Aldus*, pp. 188–189.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Anthony Grafton, "Quattrocento Humanism and Classical Scholarship," in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. III, pp. 23–66.

¹⁹⁸ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 170.4–5: "tanta librorum copia, quantam paucis annis miranda haec succinctaque imprimendorum librorum ratio peperit."

¹⁹⁹ This is the argument of Chavasse, "The *studia humanitatis*"; see also Lowry's comment, cited above in note 9. Aldus Manutius would also praise printing in his prefaces as the preserver of classical Greek and Latin culture; see Aldo Manuzio *editore: dediche, prefazioni, note ai testi*, ed. and tr. Giovanni Orlandi (Milan, 1975).

His dialogue shows that printing, like commentaries, wrought significant changes in humanist culture beyond the preservation and coordination of knowledge and the partial replacement of people by books.²⁰⁰ For example, book shops, which none of our other authors mentioned, are portrayed as a locus for humanism. The dialogue begins with a description of the wonders of Venice's bookstores, where Sabellico's friend Giuliari is said to have spent his whole day browsing the new arrivals.²⁰¹ Related to this is what we might call a culture of literary expectation. At several points in his speech Guarini mentions that forthcoming works of prized authors are eagerly awaited from the press. In one instance, he notes that Giorgio Merula "is now rumored to have written a work of history, which his vast literary production has caused his many fans to want to see."²⁰² Some fifty years earlier, Piccolomini had already expressed his anticipation for the future works of young humanists, but his was a general interest in the promise of the next generation.²⁰³ Here the case is different, since specific works of contemporary authors, whose titles and contents are already vaguely known, are hungrily awaited by an admiring public. Finally, printed books seem to have partially corrected the great defect of the manuscript form they were on the way to replacing: the limited diffusion, over space and time, of any given author's works. Guarini mentions books printed not only in Venice but also in Brescia, Florence, Perugia, Rome, and other cities, and the living humanists praised by Guarini are in no way confined to northern Italy.²⁰⁴ In another work Sabellico marveled "that one workman could print as much literature in one day as the fastest scribe could produce in two years."²⁰⁵ Print had not, however, bridged the gap completely. Thus Brugnoli says he has not seen any works of Giovanni Pontano, who was so highly praised by Cortesi.²⁰⁶ But Pontano was active in Naples, and his works would not be printed, and thus widely available,

²⁰⁰ For Sabellico's attitude towards printing, cf. Bottari, "Introduzione" (Sabellico), pp. 51–52, 57–58.

²⁰¹ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 85.1–86.4. See also Baker, "Labyrinth of Praise and Blame," pp. 216–217.

²⁰² Sabellico, *DLLR*, 178.3–5: "nunc constans phama est animum ad historiam adiecisse, in cuius videndae expectationem iam multos frequentia litterarum ad amicos erexit." Other examples are Filippo Beroaldo's commentary on Propertius (184.1ff.) and Antonio Costanzi's commentary on Ovid's *Fasti* (190.2ff.).

²⁰³ E.g., Piccolomini's hopes for Patrizi and Marsuppini (see Chapter 1, p. 44).

²⁰⁴ The place of publication of the various works mentioned throughout the dialogue can be found *passim* in Bottari's notes to Sabellico, *DLLR*.

²⁰⁵ Marcantonio Sabellico, *Rapsodiae historiarum ab orbe condito*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. II (Basel, 1560): *Enneades* X, lib. VI, col. 958 (cited in Chavasse, "The First Known Author's Copyright," p. 11). Sabellico's letters also testify to his awareness of the possibilities of printing. See Lowry, *World of Aldus*, p. 28.

²⁰⁶ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 157.4ff.

until the 1490s. Of course, these insights about printing are not news to modern scholars, who have been aware of them and others at least since Elizabeth Eisenstein's seminal study, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*.²⁰⁷ What is extraordinary, however, is that Sabellico grasped them as they were developing.

Finally, Sabellico directs our attention to one further significant development then taking shape in the new humanism of the printed page: the Vatican Library's growing role as a central repository for humanist literature and as an independent source of authority in creating a modern canon.²⁰⁸ The library had existed as a private papal and curial resource ever since the Middle Ages, and during the residency in Avignon it could already boast of a respectable number of literary titles. In the papacy of Nicholas V, however, it was consciously transformed into a humanistic collection of ancient and modern classics, and in 1475, under Sixtus IV, it became a public lending library. By the time Sabellico wrote *De latinae linguae reparatione*, it was one of the leading libraries in all of Europe. Twice it is mentioned as *the* library in the dialogue, with mere inclusion in its collection a signal of an author's inherent worth.²⁰⁹ In one instance, regarding Tito Strozzi's poems, we read: "not only their reputation but the papal library itself, where they deserve to be housed, highly recommends them."²¹⁰ Even more telling is the description of Angelo Sabino's *Belgicum carmen*, as it shows the library's influence on literary opinion: "we have not read it, but since they say it has been placed in the papal library, we are forced to approve it without having seen it, even though there are some who say they have read it and plainly criticize it as not polished enough."²¹¹ The library has such great critical clout that a work in its collection must be praised *ipso facto*, even without having been seen, and a Vatican shelfmark apparently trumps all other criticism. The status Sabellico accords the library gives us insight into two important trends. First, it is a testament to the wide availability and the easy movement of books at the time. Otherwise the contents of

²⁰⁷ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1979).

²⁰⁸ On the Vatican Library, see Miglio, "Curial Humanism"; Anthony Grafton (ed.), *Rome Reborn: The Vatican Library and Renaissance Culture* (Washington, DC, 1993), esp. pp. xi–xx, 3–45; and Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, pp. 282–286.

²⁰⁹ This has also been noted in Mercati, *Ultimi contributi*, p. 17.

²¹⁰ Sabellico, *DLLR*, 158.1–3: "Titi Strotii poemata praeter phamam ipsa pontificis bibliotheca, in quam reponi meruerunt, praecipue comendat."

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 154.4–7: "Angeli Sabini turrensis Belgicum carmen non legimus, sed quia in Pontificis bibliotheca repositum aiunt, cogimur nondum visum probare, et si non desunt qui se legisse dicant dammentque aperte opus ut parum elaboratum."

its collection would represent an eclectic or local taste restricted by the exigencies of time and place, rather than the result of careful consideration and a selection from among the vast number of available titles. Put a different way, only a library that has the means to acquire everything can claim truly to have given form to its collection on the grounds of quality alone; both its own resources and those of the market must be near to boundless. Second, the Vatican Library embodies a centralization and homogenization of humanism. All of our authors portray humanism as a pan-Italian movement, but their texts also highlight local traditions and peculiarities that underscore its decentralized nature. Sabellico is no different. Yet in this respect he indicates that a center of critical judgment and opinion was forming in Rome, that an authority was rising to which all humanists must give due consideration when writing their own works or reading those of others. The fact that a Roman library could be cited as an authority for literary opinion in Venice means that humanism had taken another giant step towards transcending the local context – a step similar in magnitude to the proselytization wrought by Petrarch's writings. Much more so than ever before, we can now speak of *Italian* humanism.

The Vatican Library as an official repository for the great literature of high culture, as the authority for a new canon of *auctores*, symbolizes one of the most important differences between Marcantonio Sabellico's account of humanism and all the others considered in this study. Here, the stylistic and bibliographic poverty that marked both the Middle Ages and the early phases of humanism has disappeared. The ravages of invaders, of time, of oblivion, have been mended. The classical form of the Latin language has been restored, and with it the hope for a broader, permanent cultural renewal. We are far from Piccolomini's desire for future generations to achieve full mastery of Ciceronian speech, from Facio's proud reckoning of the ongoing renaissance of letters, from Biondo's exultation in the army of teachers spreading the Good Word of humanism, and from Manetti's naïve satisfaction with the Latin of Petrarch. We have even transcended the cultural achievement proclaimed by Cortesi; for his humanism flourished in the private company of a select few. Here humanism reigns triumphant, not only in its project to recover what was lost, but also in its aim to secure the blessings of Latin for generations to come. The Vatican Library acts as a foil for the barbarian destruction that Sabellico's Brugnoli evokes in the exordium of his speech:

Unspeakably [the Goths] kept their hands from no human bloodshed, no temples, no place at all either sacred or profane. The barbarian heedlessly

desecrated everything human and divine. But these events, being in the hands of fortune, are perhaps less to be mourned. The greater misfortune, more worthy of grief and lament, is that *no hope was left to posterity*. For once Rome was taken, not only were its citizens expelled and its public and private monuments disfigured, but also the divine treasury of its literature – *which if it alone had remained intact could have acted as a symbol for the rest of Roman civilization* – together with public and private libraries was lost to flames and plunder.²¹²

Ancient Roman civilization was inextricably intertwined with its literature: when one was wiped out, so was the other. By philologically reconstituting the language and literature of classical antiquity, humanists figuratively restocked the “divine treasury” of Rome’s lost library. This is the extent of Cortesi’s vision. Sabellico goes further. With the mass printing of books, the resulting mass proliferation of Latin literature and scholarship, and the attendant rise of the Vatican Library as a central repository for *bonae litterae*, humanists physically reconstructed the “symbol for the rest of Roman civilization.” In this way, in their own minds at least, humanists overcame a thousand years of barbarism and lent hope to posterity. They created the conditions for a new Golden Age.

²¹² Ibid., 95.1–10: “Non hominum caede, non templis, non sacro ullo loco aut prophano infandae manus abstinuerunt; omnia divina et humana barbara prophanavit temeritas, sed haec, quia in gremio fortunae sita, minus fortasse lugubria, illa clades multo maior, illa et dolore et lamentatione dignior, quod Urbs capta non solum civibus est exhausta, publicis privatisque operibus deformata, sed divino etiam litterarum thesauro, qua una re incolumi caetera suo stare vestigio videri potuissent, bibliothecis publicis et privatis flamma vel rapina consumptis, nihil spei reliquum posteris facere” (emphasis mine).